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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIFTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1991-92

COMPRISING PERIOD
18 November—29 November 1991

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 199

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1991-92

House of Commons

Monday 18 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents (Earnings Disregard)

1. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the amount of earnings disregard before benefits for lone parents are affected.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): We have no plans at present to change the earnings disregard in income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit. However, in family credit, the threshold at which earnings start to affect the maximum credit for lone parents will be increased at next April's uprating from £62·25 to £66·60.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging news. As he will know, those in work who earn more than £15 a week lose £1 for every £1 that they earn. That discourages people from working.

Almost 1 million lone parents are now managing on benefit. Only 10 per cent. work, and the number is falling. Will my hon. Friend consider allowing working women in such circumstances a greater disregard? Will he at least allow them the cost of paying childminders? I am sure that he agrees that we should not dock the benefit of deserving mums.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for advancing, in her characteristic way, the case of women who wish to return to the labour market.

The Government have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said. As she will know, from next April a £15 maintenance disregard will, for the first time, be applied to family credit. We shall also reduce the number of hours required for people to qualify for that benefit. Given those two improvements—together with child benefit, one-parent benefit and housing benefit—many women in my hon. Friend's constituency will find that they have enough financial room for manoeuvre, so that they can both go out to work and meet their childcare costs.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister will recognise that lone parents are being given some useful assistance under the "children come first" proposals, in the form of a reduction from 24 to 16 hours in the full-time working week. Is he aware that many people who work part time, for less than 24 hours a week, and who can currently claim income support, will lose out substantially in terms of mortgage interest relief? Have the Government considered that and, if so, what steps is the Minister taking to mitigate the losses involved?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for asking that question. The Government have carefully considered the matter, and transitional arrangements will be made to safeguard those who are now receiving income support and would like to move to family credit, but may be worried for precisely the reasons that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

Pensioners

2. **Mr. Andrew Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many low-income pensioners are expected to gain from the measures he announced in his uprating statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The proposed uprating of income support by a full 7 per cent. from next April will give increases substantially above the current level of inflation to around 3·5 million low-income pensioners where the claimant or partner is aged 60 or over.

Mr. Hargreaves: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he accept that many Conservative Members are anxious that any future measures should be directed specifically towards those receiving small pensions or basic pensions but no works or professional pensions? How much danger would be posed to such pensions by some of Labour's high-inflation, high-spending policies?

Mr. Newton: It goes without saying that those on retirement incomes were among the principal sufferers under the taxation and inflation rates of the late 1970s.

It is precisely to direct extra resources to the pensioners, about whom my right hon. Friend is rightly concerned, that we have increased income support premiums for three successive years, providing more than £300 million extra in real terms. I think that we are succeeding in that aim.

Mr. Madden: Does the Secretary of State accept that the miserly 4·1 per cent. given to those on state pensions has been met with a resounding raspberry? Does he refuse, even now, to double the Christmas bonus to £20, to give a little Christmas cheer to hard-up pensioners? While he is at it, will he adopt Labour's policy and top up next year's pension increase by £5 for single pensioners and £8 for couples? That, surely, is the least that the right hon. Gentleman could do to inject some justice and fairness into the lives of our pensioners.

Mr. Newton: I make just two points. First, if the hon. Gentleman considers what has happened over the past two years, to the basic retirement pension, quite apart from income support premiums, he will find that they have risen by 15 per cent. That is a very substantial increase. Secondly, I heard what the hon. Gentleman said about the Christmas bonus, but many other people would think that if the relevant sums of money were available—and they would be quite substantial—they should be directed to the less well-off pensioners.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend knows that Opposition parties constantly carp about the level of pensions in Britain. Will he confirm that many aspects of social security systems in other countries compare unfavourably with ours? For example, no other European Community country pays pensions in their own right to married women with no contribution record.

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case that in much of what is said about pension comparisons with Europe, areas that would lead to a substantial loss among some British pensioners, including those to whom my hon. Friend referred, are often overlooked. Another fact that is also overlooked is that in most other European countries, people must make contributions, for example to health care, which do not arise here.

Mr. Allen: The Secretary of State is aware that had the Government not broken the link between the rise in pensions and the rise in earnings, the single pensioner would be receiving £14 more a week and a couple £24 more a week. That means that more and more elderly people are being forced down to income support or poverty line levels. The Secretary of State's last uprating statement means that another 400,000 pensioners are now eligible for income support. That in itself is an indictment of the Government. Will he ensure that at that poverty level, those additional 400,000 pensioners are informed of their rights to claim income support so that they can at the very least receive what little is due to them under this Government?

Mr. Newton: I have to say that I find something quite extraordinary in the spectacle of an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman apparently complaining that we are to make a potential 400,000 pensioners better off. I hope that he will acknowledge that. With regard to his latter point, I know that he has sought, and has rightly been provided by the Department, a copy of the circular that we have sent to local authorities precisely to enlist their assistance to ensure that pensioners who will gain from the proposals receive those gains.

Cold Weather Payments

3. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he has taken to improve the working of the cold weather payments scheme.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The cold weather payments scheme has been considerably improved for the coming winter. Payments of £6 for every period of cold weather will be paid automatically to eligible people as soon as a seven-day period of exceptionally cold weather is forecast by the Met Office or actually occurs. The capital rule has also been abolished, making approximately 400,000 more people eligible for payments. In addition, some improvements have been made to weather station linkages.

Mr. Sayeed: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. He knows that I have often thought that the exceptional needs payment scheme was complex, slow and did not often reach those most in need. Is the new system speedy? Will it reach those who are entitled to it and is it far less complex than the old system?

Mr. Scott: I would put particular emphasis on two factors. The first is the ability of the Met Office to forecast cold weather in advance with some accuracy so that payments can be made in advance rather than in arrears. Secondly, people will be paid automatically without having to fill in a claim form or other kind of document.

Dr. Godman: I am not going to whinge that the weather in Scotland is always colder than in England. However, I plead with the Minister to examine the local system on the Clyde. The weather station at Glasgow airport is too far from the homes of many of my constituents and their homes are also several hundred feet above sea level. Will he re-examine the system and the way in which it affects people on the lower Clyde?

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Gentleman knows, in Scotland we made a number of changes to the linkages of weather stations with local areas. If he wants me to reconsider the changes, I shall, of course, do so. However, he will understand that in such matters I rely heavily upon the professionals at the Meteorological Office for advice.

Mr. David Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has already been snow in the north, the midlands, and even on Exmoor in my constituency? Is my right hon. Friend also aware that there is concern about the efficiency of the cold weather payments system? Will he confirm, therefore, that the present system is greatly superior to what existed under the previous Labour Government, whose supporters make such hypocritical remarks about their concern for old people?

Mr. Scott: I reiterate the point that I made to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). On the advice of the Meteorological Office, I further fine-tuned the system, but I am prepared to consider individual cases again, if necessary.

Mr. Bradley: The cold weather payment scheme is still wholly inadequate, with thousands of pensioners whose incomes are just above the income support level receiving no extra help with their fuel charges. As fuel costs are going ahead of inflation, will the Minister enter into immediate discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy and the fuel industry to examine the standing charge, which is iniquitous and which adversely affects low-income families, and pensioners in particular?

Mr. Scott: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box and to his newly appointed position. I look forward to doing battle with him in the coming weeks and months. I trust that, after the next election, he will remain a Front-Bench spokesman for the Opposition.

The present scheme has, in recent years, been made substantially more generous than the previous one. The actions of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he was responsible for such matters, together with our recent announcement, have made arrangements for the coming winter much more generous. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue his last point, he should do so with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Homeless Families (Diet)

5. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account was taken in the review of the arrangements for income support of homeless families of the need of children of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation to have a balanced diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Since April 1989, people in board-and-lodging accommodation have been treated in the same way as most other recipients of income support. They receive housing benefit to cover the cost of their accommodation and the standard income support personal allowances and premiums to meet their day-to-day living expenses.

Mr. Steen: I welcome the Government's initiative to help the homeless, and we are grateful for what the Department of the Environment has done. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many bed-and-breakfast families are living below the level of subsistence and that parents go without so that children can eat? Does he agree that, as we approach the Christmas season, it would be appropriate to have a homeless children's Christmas bonus, perhaps of £10 a week, and then longer-term arrangements through supplement for income support, so that we can guarantee that every child in bed-and-breakfast accommodation can have a hot meal every day?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend will recognise that, in introducing the concept of premiums into income support, we have made it possible to concentrate help on those who most need it, and not least families with young children. They, of course, will get the appropriate premiums, whatever accommodation they are in. I should be very reluctant to go back to anything like the old system, which gave a perverse incentive for landlords to provide board and lodging rather than other accommodation.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that board and lodging is a second-best provision for those families? Is he satisfied that the new system encourages local authorities to provide houses—rented accommodation—for those people and that the numbers that are dependent on board and lodging are decreasing?

Mr. Scott: As I said, that is a matter for Environment Ministers. I, too, welcome the fact that we are trying to move away from a system that does not benefit families, local chargepayers, or anybody else. We need as little as possible of the concept of board and lodging and bed and breakfast.

Mr. Paice: Is not every child whose parents are on income support entitled to a free school meal? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the immense burden that is being placed on education authorities in the current year because of the increase in the numbers entitled to free school meals? We recognise why that is, and it is a perfectly reasonable requirement that they should be given that free school meal, but it is producing a rather sudden burden for education authorities which they are finding difficult to accommodate at present.

Mr. Scott: I take my hon. Friend's point, but I must say to him that it is not a matter for me.

Mr. O'Hara: May we have an assurance that the Minister takes full account of the particular needs of children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, among whom there is a high incidence of low birth weight, weight loss, malnourishment and exposure to infectious diseases which is associated with the inadequate cooking and food storage facilities in such accommodation? Commonly, families are excluded during the daytime from such facilities as there are. As a result, such families depend on convenience foods which are more expensive than other foods, and have to purchase food in small quantities which makes it even more expensive. Is the Minister satisfied that the particular needs of those children are met by present arrangements?

Mr. Scott: I accept much of what the hon. Gentleman said. That is one of the reasons why the Government as a whole and especially my colleagues in the Department of the Environment wish to minimise the use of that type of accommodation.

Local Offices (Strathclyde)

6. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the number of those employed in local Department of Social Security offices in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the past three years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The number of staff employed in local Benefits Agency offices in Strathclyde at 1 April 1989 was 3,774, at 1 April 1990, 3,661 and at 1 April 1991, 3,267. Of those, 204 were employed in Greenock and Port Glasgow in April 1989, 220 in April 1990 and 184 in April 1991.

Dr. Godman: Do not those inadequate staffing levels explain why many of my constituents have to wait so long for their applications for disability benefit, severe disability premium and industrial injury benefit? Why is that? Only this morning I received a letter from a lady in Port Glasgow which states that her husband made his claim in relation to the heat cataract from which he suffers in September 1989. His appeal, which he won, was heard on 29 September this year. Yet he has heard nothing from the local Benefits Agency. Is that what we can expect from the Benefits Agency? Will the Minister consider employing more people in Port Glasgow and Greenock, especially in respect of such claims and those which have been made vis-a-vis regulation 72?

Miss Widdecombe: Despite the hon. Gentleman's claim of poor staffing, Greenock and Port Glasgow are ahead on most of the national and area targets for the year. The hon. Member will understand that there was a take-up campaign for disablement benefits directed particularly at the dockyards and shipbuilding. The campaign resulted in 1,400 claims being received in Greenock and Port Glasgow. As a result, 1,367 claims were removed to Stranraer, which had the experienced staff and surplus capacity to deal with the claims. Only 86 claims were outstanding because of the category into which the vast majority fell. Four of those are awaiting medical boards, two are awaiting a decision and 80 have been submitted for an appeal tribunal hearing. If the hon. Gentleman's office is ahead of national and area targets and if it can transfer claims to an office which will deal with them at that rate, the overall picture seems rather better than the hon. Gentleman portrays.

Social Security Appeals

7. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to introduce measures to reduce the time taken to determine appeals against the disallowance of social security benefits.

Mr. Newton: I understand from the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that several initiatives are currently being proposed or piloted in conjunction with the Independent Tribunal Service to reduce the time taken to determine appeals.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that too many appeals take too long to determine and that causes a great deal of anxiety to applicants? Does he agree that something drastic needs to be done about that?

Mr. Newton: I do not quite go along with the way in which my hon. Friend presents the position. I accept that we all want to see an improvement in the speed of determining appeals. Both the Benefits Agency and, indeed, Judge Holden, as president of the Independent Tribunal Service are devoting a great deal of time and attention to the matter at present. There has been an interesting pilot scheme to speed up submissions in family credit cases. It looks as if the scheme will provide a model to speed up other appeal processes. I accept my hon. Friend's underlying anxiety. We shall certainly continue to do everything that we can to improve the position.

Mr. Meacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 16 to 17-year-olds are the biggest group who are disallowed benefit, and that latest estimates suggest that 65,000 of them have no job, no training, no further education and no benefit? Is he aware of a recent survey which found that 21 per cent. admitted that they could support themselves only by stealing, 6 per cent. only by begging and 2 per cent. only by selling drugs, and that many were starving and had not eaten for several days? Is not the right hon. Gentleman ashamed of the hypocrisy of the Government talking about the citizens charter while depriving tens of thousands of their citizens of the basic essentials of life?

Mr. Newton: I suppose that I could say that that question has nothing to do with the original question. Whether or not it has, it is a characteristically overheated piece of Oldham hype talk. We have made persistent and, in my view, successful attempts to improve the operation of that part of the benefit system. That, and the severe hardship provision—of which he is well aware, but did not even mention—are working well.

Pensioners

8. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of extra help, including measures in the 1991 uprating statement, which has been directed to less-well-off pensioners since 1989.

Mr. Newton: The proposed additions to the income support higher pensioner premium from next April will increase social security expenditure by £60 million. That means that the total cost of help for pensioners on low incomes, over and above that resulting from normal upratings since 1989 will amount to about one third of a billion pounds.

Mr. Browne: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proportion of pensioners who claim income support fell significantly over the 10 years beginning 1979? Will he please tell the House what percentage rise the lowest 20 per cent. are receiving in real terms?

Mr. Newton: A study of the incomes of the least-well-off pensioners will show that there has been an increase of about 15 per cent. in the standard of living of the lowest quintile. I hope that that is the sort of information that my hon. Friend wants. Pensioners' living standards have been rising faster than those of the population as a whole. That reflects not only social security policies, including those touched on in the original question, but the greatly improved income from savings and occupational pensions, which have been such a feature of the past 10 years.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Secretary of State consider reinstating the disregard for retired mineworkers and their widows? They have lost income through the concessionary fuel allowance and, therefore, in many instances are being driven into the lowest benefit possible—income support. If the allowance for fuel were reinstated, it would lift their benefits and standard of living. Would he give that serious consideration?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, with his experience, will know that we went to considerable trouble earlier this year to try to ensure that the changes being made by British Coal did not have adverse effects on pensioners. I am sure that the right approach overall is the one that we have adopted—that is, to put additional resources into income support premiums to help low-income pensioners regardless of in which industry they may have worked.

Care Homes

9. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are expected to benefit from the increased funding from residential care and nursing home income support limits announced in October 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: The increased income support limits are expected to help about 265,000 people.

Dame Peggy Fenner: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, which I know will be of benefit to quite a large number of my constituents and also a consolation to those in residential care and nursing homes, who were becoming concerned. Does she agree that that again gives an example of extra help to the most vulnerable among our older population—those who need residential care and nursing?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is right. She may be interested to know that whereas those benefits cost £10 million when the Conservative Government came to power in 1979, we are now paying about £1·6 billion, which is a sign of our commitment to help the poor pensioner.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State has made great play of his proposed increased funding for residential homes to £175 a place next April. Is he aware that that level of income support is already grossly inadequate for homes in London and the south-east? According to a survey by the Association of Directors of Social Services only a month ago, the proposed level of income support is already £70 a week short of the actual charges being made today in Watford, £80 short in Edgware and £95 short in Edmonton. Since another survey has shown that as a result of those shortfalls elderly relatives have been evicted from private homes in more than one in four social service department areas, will the Minister now have the grace to recognise that the privatisation of old people's homes has been an extremely expensive error, of which many elderly, frail residents have been the chief victims?

Miss Widdecombe: As usual, the hon. Gentleman has got the whole thing wrong. As ever, he is confusing costs with charges. He is also ignoring both the survey conducted by this Department which showed clearly that many homes manage and the fact that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State addressed the National Care Homes Association he was given a standing ovation, so they cannot be too discontent. Evidence of evictions is negligible. The hon. Gentleman completely overlooks, conveniently, the responsibilities that local authorities have even now towards those who require care and cannot afford it.

Pensioners

10. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average income of a single pensioner and pensioner couple on income support; and what is the total weekly value of their income from all benefits.

Mr. Newton: The average total weekly income of pensioners on income support excluding housing benefit is, for a single person, £56·70, of which £56·20 is benefit income; and for a couple £91·20, £90·30 of which is made up of benefit.

Mr. Bowden: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the old-fashioned Labour party view that all pensioners have low incomes is now completely outdated? Since so many pensioners in retirement own their own houses and have good occupational pensions, investments, savings and interest-bearing shares, is not it crazy to give an across-the-board uprating? Is not it better to target resources on those who need them most?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is entirely right to point to the rising number of pensioners who have significant sources of income other than the state retirement pension. That has emerged several times in today's Question Time. I agree that in making extra real resources available, as we have been doing, it is right to steer them towards those who do not have those extra incomes and are therefore most in need.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know where all these rich pensioners are, but they certainly do not live in my constituency. Is not it outrageous that any Tory Member should suggest that £56 a week for a single pensioner and £91 a week for a pensioner couple is in any way adequate? Those are miserly sums. When one considers the sums available to pensioners in other European countries, the Secretary of State should be ashamed of himself. I am ashamed that so many pensioners have to live on the sort of money that Tory Members will spend on dinner tonight.

Mr. Newton: Before the hon. Gentleman gets too overheated, let me make two simple points. First, the particular part of London that he represents may have an above-average proportion of less well-off pensioners. That is another way of saying that he has a population that will have benefited disproportionately from the increases that we have steered towards less well-off pensioners. Secondly, as I emphasised in my answer, these figures exclude housing benefit. To get the real comparison of what is being paid to many of those pensioners each week, we need to add the 100 per cent. support with the rent which they also get.

Child Benefit

11. **Sir Peter Blaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children will benefit from the October uprating of child benefit.

Mr. Jack: Child benefit is paid for about 12·3 million children. My right hon. Friend may be interested to know that 1·5 million of them are in the north-west and 300,000 in Lancashire. Every one of them will gain from the October increases.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, by the time of the increase next April, child benefit will have increased no fewer than three times in the space of 12 months? Will he also transmit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State my congratulations on his decision to locate 550 extra jobs in the Blackpool, Fylde and Preston area? That is extremely welcome and those jobs will be well performed.

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the tenacity with which he has put the case for his constituents regarding the location of jobs in our constituencies. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State noted my hon. Friend's remarks. The three upratings have cost £1 billion and our record is in stark contrast to that of the Labour Government, who cut benefits to families with children by 7 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Eastham: The Minister and the Government may take all the glory for the recent increases, but if things are so good, why did the Government refuse for several years to uprate child benefit when they knew that the same needs as now existed?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed that since the social security system changed in the 1987-88 financial year we have managed to increase in real terms the benefits up to April 1992—in addition to all the other expenditure—for low-income families by £600 million. We must balance how we use our resources and, by doing so, we have been able to help such families.

Disabled People

14. **Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to ensure that disabled people receive benefits to which they are entitled.

Mr. Scott: We are planning a wide range of activities to publicise the introduction in April next year of disability living allowance and disability working allowance and we shall be involving disabled people and their organisations in the publicity campaign to ensure effective take-up of these and other benefits for disabled people.

Sir John Hunt: Should not my right hon. Friend's welcome announcement lead to a further significant take-up of disability benefits? The mobility allowance has increased sevenfold since 1979 and during the same time there has been a substantial increase in disability benefits. All those increases demonstrate the Government's continuing concern for the needs of the disabled.

Mr. Scott: The increases in the coverage of attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalid care allowance and other benefits for disabled people during the term of the Government have been remarkable. Sometimes the Opposition appear to criticise us for that, but our take-up campaigns have been successful. However, we are learning new techniques all the time and they will be applied to disability working allowance and disability living allowance.

Attendance Allowance

15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will introduce changes to speed up the payment of attendance allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to announce that from April next year we are introducing a fundamentally different claims and adjudication system for disability living allowance and attendance allowance for people over 65 which will significantly improve the time taken to deal with claims to those benefits.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister is referring to the fact that the Government are going to modify the sixth-month waiting allowance that applies to people who get payments such as the attendance allowance. However, some cancer victims do not qualify, because, unfortunately, they have passed on. From what I can gather, the Government are refusing to pay retrospectively all those who claim attendance allowance in the proper manner, irrespective of their illness. In April will the Minister ensure that no claimant for attendance allowance and all the other benefits loses out retrospectively? It is not good enough for the Government to say that they will improve the benefits for some exceptional cases, but not for all. So get rid of the six-month allowance for everyone.

Mr. Scott: The DLA will subsume attendance allowance and mobility allowance. This new benefit will substantially lower the threshold that people have to meet. For the care component of the new benefit the qualifying period will be reduced from six months to three months. Those on existing benefits will automatically transfer to the new benefits. The hon. Gentleman referred to terminally ill people. We have removed the qualifying period——

Mr. Skinner: For some of them.

Mr. Scott: No, all terminally ill people qualify in that way. The other significant fact about the new benefits is that we will rely far less on medical examinations and more on the assessment of disabled people and their carers when determining the extent of their disability and its effect on their life.

Child Benefit

16. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the total value to a two-child family of the three increases in child benefit which will have taken place in the year to April 1992.

Mr. Jack: For a two-child family, those increases will be worth £2·95 a week, taking total child benefit to £17·45 a week. For a family on average income, that is equal to an increase in gross earnings of £1,350 a year.

Mr. Rost: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of the Government's generous increase in child benefit, our provision now compares favourably with that of many other European countries? For example, will he compare our provision with that of socialist France?

Mr. Jack: Clearly, my hon. Friend has been doing his research extremely well, because in France there is no equivalent to the benefit that we pay for the first child. If the French scheme were to be replicated here, 40 per cent.

of mothers would not receive child benefit. In several other EC countries, there are extra entitlement conditions. Greece, Germany and Italy have means tests, while Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain link eligibility to insurance. My hon. Friend is right to say that our provision is generous.

Pensioners

18. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received regarding the income of pensioners.

Mr. Newton: In the past month, Ministers have met two delegations to discuss issues of general concern to pensioners.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Secretary of State aware of the deep concern and anger that is felt by pensioners? Despite the statement that was made earlier today, they feel that they are being victimised. A large number of pensioners, especially those on income support and just above the income support level, face another winter of struggling daily to make ends meet. The Government should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves because of how those pensioners have lost out as a result of the decision taken in 1980, which resulted in pensions no longer being increased in line with earnings. A married couple has lost out by £24 a week directly as a result of Tory Government action.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that the pensioners about whom he is concerned—many Conservative Members share that concern—have benefited from the successive improvements in income support premiums of the past three years. Some 1 million such pensioners will gain next April from what I announced a few weeks ago, either directly through extra income support or through the effect of increased housing benefit or community charge benefit. I am not ashamed of that; I am glad that we have been able to do more to help those pensioners and I hope that we can continue to do so.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Deliberate Injustice

27. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Attorney-General if there are any restrictions upon his ability to investigate a case of alleged deliberate injustice.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I do not have investigatory powers of the sort referred to by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Browne: What advice would my right hon. and learned Friend give to those seeking appeal under clause 5 of article 14 of the United Nations international convention on civil and political rights, especially where a quite deliberate injustice has been perpetrated by senior Government Ministers intent on injustice to a Member of a sovereign Parliament by misleading that Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot accuse a Minister of misleading the House.

Mr. Browne: I withdraw the words "senior Government Ministers" and say, certain persons.

The Attorney-General: No, Sir. I do not give advice on abstract questions. If my hon. Friend's ingenious question were to induce me to comment on proceedings that are wholly a matter for the House, that would be wrong.

Prosecution Delays

28. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to reduce the time between individuals being arrested and their being prosecuted.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The detailed recommendations of the working group on pre-trial issues and the recently announced plan for their implementation incorporate proposals that are intended to reduce delays throughout the criminal justice system.

Mr. Marshall: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Mr. Leslie Huckfield was acquitted some three years after he was first charged? Is not that a case of justice delayed, justice denied? Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that relatively simple cases will be dealt with speedily?

The Solicitor-General: I am glad to assure my hon. Friend that relatively simple cases will be speeded up, particularly when the costed action plan for the recommendations of the working group on pre-trial issues comes into effect. The case that he mentioned arose only after detailed investigations by the police on a much wider series of matters.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Solicitor-General examine the delays in prosecutions, particularly the case of Mr. Don Stewart, who phoned me this morning and who is a frightened man? He was held hostage in a car for 24 hours and shot at the end of that period. He has discovered in the past few days that the man who committed the alleged offence is now on bail. Will the Solicitor-General look at that extraordinary series of events and ensure that we speed up the systems of prosecution and sentencing to prevent such incidents from occurring?

The Solicitor-General: Problems of offences being committed while people are on bail are very much in the forefront of the minds of all those involved with the criminal justice system.

City Fraud

29. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on recent initiatives by the Serious Fraud Office in connection with City fraud.

The Attorney-General: The SFO has continued its work of investigating and prosecuting serious and complex fraud. Its objectives are to increase the efficiency of the criminal justice system in this regard, to deter fraud and to maintain confidence in our financial systems.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Attorney-General draw the attention of the SFO to the fact that just round the corner at Westminster city council there has been another allegation of serious fraud involving a charity called the Foundation for Business Responsibilities. The £100,000 plus received from big business and Tories in the City was used, not for charity—although the contributions were probably set off against tax—but to keep control of key marginal wards in Westminister council. It seems odd that

Lady Porter and her cronies on Westminster council can do as they like with the Government and the SFO—they seem to have got away with the cemeteries episode and now are involved in another big scam. While Labour councils are surcharged and kicked out of public office, Lady Porter and her cronies get away with blue murder. Why does not the Attorney-General have an investigation?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman does not need me to tell him, because I have told him about six times already this Parliament, that if there is evidence of criminal behaviour in any quarter it should be drawn to the attention of the police. It is due to a Conservative Government's initiative that we now have a specialist office with powers to investigate and prosecute serious and complex fraud which has brought highly effective results. The hon. Gentleman seems to find it impossible to forgive that.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the SFO is extremely effective? By far the highest number of prosecutions brought to a successful outcome at the Old Bailey are connected with fraud. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the extra powers of the SFO have resulted in those convictions? Long may the SFO continue to get to the bottom of many of the complex frauds which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wants us to look at.

The Attorney-General: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the powers that Parliament has given the SFO were necessary and are being well used in the interests of justice. The SFO is greatly admired in many other countries; people come here to find out how it goes about its business and what powers it has. It sets an example which is being widely followed and co-operates effectively with other organisations overseas. It is a success story of which the House can be proud.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Attorney-General reconsider his dismissive answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about what has been described in the quality papers as the Porter slush fund? Does not the Attorney-General have special responsibility, first, as a Tory, secondly, as the person who supervises prosecutions and, thirdly, as the Minister with responsibility for charities? Does he agree that probity, like charity, should begin at home? Will he set in hand an investigation into whether charitable funds were improperly used in Westminster to influence election results in favour of the Conservative party? Will he at least undertake to the House that he will set in hand that investigation?

The Attorney-General: If my reply to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was dismissive, it was because it is right to dismiss bald assertions of crime when no investigation has been carried out. If there are matters that should be investigated by the police, the police should be told of them.

Mr. Tony Banks: It was on the front page of *The Observer*.

The Attorney-General: Then that is the answer to the hon. Members for Bolsover and for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). There is no desire on the part of the Government, the prosecuting authorities or myself, holding responsibility for the interests of charities, that anything improper should be covered up. That has always been so and it will continue to be so.

Legal Aid

30. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the care with which public money is spent on legal aid and of the adequacy with which records are kept of its disbursement.

The Solicitor-General: Legal aid payments are subject to control by the courts, known as taxation, and to internal and external independent audit. Records are kept or destroyed in accordance with Public Record Office guidelines.

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend share my concern that when it is alleged that a bill paid by legal aid is billed for privately by a solicitor, no one can determine whether that is true or investigate whether it is true? Even if such investigations are carried out, the records are destroyed—even if a Member of Parliament has taken up the matter. One of my constituents is in precisely that predicament and no one can give me a clear answer about whether there has been double billing.

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend has been looking with great care at the problem of his constituent. The problem has been examined by the solicitors complaints bureau, the solicitors disciplinary tribunal and, quite independently, by the new legal services ombudsman, who found no improper activity.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Debt Write-off

36. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the write-off of outstanding debt to third world countries will have on his plans for aid to Africa.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The statement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Harare that we are to reduce the official debts of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries by around two thirds is greatly welcomed by eligible countries. The granting of Trinidad terms will significantly enhance the overall level of United Kingdom support for the poorest countries, especially those in Africa.

Mr. Speller: Does my right hon. Friend accept that not only have certain countries been helped by this great relief but it has done a great deal for the reputation of this country, which has removed an unbearable burden from countries overburdened by debt to the advanced world? Will she press for countries in west Africa such as Nigeria and Ghana to be included among those with great needs and with great expectations of this Government?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend. The cost to the United Kingdom of the two thirds write-off will be more than £500 million, which will therefore greatly benefit the nations that come under the Trinidad terms. We believe

that Nigeria should be eligible for debt relief; we continue to argue her case in the Paris Club. Her official debt stands at about $12 billion.

Mr. Pike: In view of rapidly changing circumstances, including writing off certain debts and the ending of apartheid in South Africa, what priority is the Minister allocating to the educational needs of black people in South Africa to help them meet the challenges ahead once apartheid is ended?

Mrs. Chalker: The whole world knows that black people in South Africa are owed education. We have concentrated our help in South Africa on education and we shall continue to do so. But now at last there is help from the South African Government for black South Africans. It is not yet enough, but they have started well and they intend to continue, so that debt to people is being assisted by British aid, too.

Mr. Rowe: There can be no one in the aid world who does not appreciate my right hon. Friend's assiduity and the tremendous practicality with which she tried to skew aid programmes to practical purposes. Will she assure us that when giving aid to developing countries in Africa, she will do all in her power to prevent the Governments of those countries from looking for sophisticated pieces of equipment and machinery which are far beyond the capacity of the people in those countries to use and to stimulate and support simple, practical courses of the kind which at the moment are, incongruously, run at the Institute of Child Health in London when they should be run in Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments, with which I sympathise. Over the past two and a half years I have taken a great deal of interest in diverting, so to speak, the former big projects to small, local-level projects. I know about the work of the Institute of Child Health and warmly commend it, as I commend the work of many other British specialist institutes. With our non-governmental organisations, they provide some of the most effective ways in which to give help to the poorest people who so desperately need it.

Voluntary Agencies

38. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from voluntary agencies on aid policy over the last month.

Mrs. Chalker: I maintain regular contacts with voluntary agencies in the aid field and these frequently include exchanges of views on policy.

Mr. Wareing: Is the right hon. Lady aware that many voluntary agencies are greatly concerned that after years during which the Government refused to give any assistance whatever to the people of Cambodia, only a miserly £5 million has gone from the Government recently? Tragically, people in that country are still being wounded and killed by the 3 million to 4 million land mines which it is estimated are still there. Countries such as ours, which have been much at fault in not giving assistance to Cambodia, now need to make a real effort.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that until the ceasefire and the peace negotiations were completed, we were limited in what we could do. We were already working through the NGOs before that, but now we can work much better. We have already opened a diplomatic mission and we are contributing officers to the United Nations advance mission in Cambodia and making a substantial contribution to the cost of the UN presence. In aid terms, not only are we supporting the co-ordination of the donors' assistance, but we are giving £2 million towards the cost of repatriation of people in the camps along the Thai-Cambodia border and £3 million for the new World Health Organisation programme to combat the spread of malaria and other diseases and posting an experienced aid administrator to Phnom Penh. We are making available from the Department a senior medical adviser who is a Khmer speaker to the WHO office in Phnom Penh. We have already told the Cambodians that we shall establish an in-country English language training facility to help train their officials and others involved in reconstruction and redevelopment work and we shall continue our financial support for the humanitarian assistance programmes of the British NGOs. That is no small order for a country which has only just got its peace agreement.

Mr. Lester: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the policy of voluntary agencies assisting in Vietnam has been very helpful to the Government and that many voluntary agencies are now establishing offices in Hanoi to carry out programmes that will do something about the abject poverty in that country and so end the dreadful plight of the boat people?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Vietnam certainly needs a great deal of assistance. Vietnam has recently shown improvements in human rights and we can certainly assist such countries. We are glad that there are no reports of human rights abuses against returned boat people to whom we are giving specialist settlement help. I am sure that, as our NGOs develop in Vietnam, more can be done through our joint funding scheme to assist them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On the question of good governance criteria in the allocation of aid, do the principles that the right hon. Lady set out in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) apply equally to Indonesia? Will she answer yes or no?

Mrs. Chalker: I am well aware of the great anxiety in the House about Indonesia. Only a couple of days ago on 13 November at the European Community Ministers meeting we expressed our grave concern about the situation in East Timor and one of my diplomatic wing colleagues saw the Indonesian ambassador. Of course, good government applies to Indonesia as well and we shall be doing everything that we can to change those aspects in the most encouraging way, because there is much to be done.

Third World Countries

39. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held, in the past month, with his European Community ministerial colleagues concerning aid to third world countries.

Mrs. Chalker: I last met my EC ministerial colleagues at an informal Development Council at Apeldoorn in the Netherlands in July. I shall meet them again at the Development Council in Brussels next week.

Dr. Goodman: Is the European Community providing any assistance by way of NGOs to the many impoverished people in Tibet? Is not such assistance desperately needed in that occupied country and would not the best way to achieve such fine ends be through the NGOs?

Mrs. Chalker: It is perfectly true that in countries like Tibet and others where it is difficult to give assistance to the ordinary people at village level, the NGO route is by far the best one to follow. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman whether the EC is putting money through its NGOs to Tibet, but I shall write to him with an answer.

Rain Forests

42. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress with British initiatives to assist the preservation of the tropical rain forest.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government's essential aim is to help promote sustainable management of tropical forests and their biodiversity. We have increased our bilateral activities and encouraged multilaterals to do likewise and we are active in preparations for the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil next June.

Mr. Arnold: Given the expertise to be found at Kew gardens, in the Oxford Forestry Institute and elsewhere, could my right hon. Friend tell us about the measures being taken to ensure that that expertise is brought to bear, particularly in the Amazon basin?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, but if I went into this at length, you might censor me, Mr. Speaker, so I shall not. However, I can say that the royal botanical gardens at Kew, the Oxford Forestry Institute and many other excellent British academic institutions are fully engaged in our programme in South America and I hope that the G7 forestry initiative will mean that more projects come to the excellent British institutions that are already giving help. Some 185 projects are already under progress at a potential cost to our programme of £109 million.

Kurdish People

The following Questions stood upon the Paper:—

34. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to discuss aid for the Kurdish people.

35. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much Government aid has gone to Kurdish people since April of this year; what information he has on the amount of aid from United Kingdom non-governmental organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I held discussions in Geneva last week on the situation in Iraq with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the United Nations Secretary-General's executive delegate, and senior officials from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organisation of Migration and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. I heard of the considerable efforts being made by those agencies to relieve humanitarian need in Iraq and was able to discuss with them how best we might continue to assist the needs of ordinary Iraqis.

The British Government have played their full part. Since April this year, we have spent £44 million to help the people of Iraq, including over £6 million through United Kingdom non-governmental organisations, £500,000 through Iraqi humanitarian groups and £2·5 million through the ICRC. Britain maintains a contribution to the coalition force in southern Turkey which is continuing to deter any renewed repression by the Iraqi authorities.

Iraq is able to and should meet the basic requirements of all its own people. The Security Council adopted two mandatory resolutions, 706 and 712, on 15 August and 19 September. They permit the export of some $1·6 billion of Iraqi oil to meet humanitarian needs. This oil could and should already be flowing, but Saddam Hussein refuses to implement the resolutions. He is clearly using the suffering, especially of women and children, for his own cynical purposes.

Prince Sadruddin leaves for Iraq tomorrow to make progress on these points. I have given him my full support for this vital United Nations task. I am sure that he will have the full support of the whole House. Britain will continue to play her full part in alleviating suffering in Iraq. The last months have proved that the international community is more concerned for the people of Iraq than are their own Government.

Mr. Barnes: What estimates have been made of the needs of the Kurds and how much of the material that has been made available to them has been able to get through? What protections are available? What is the latest information about the field hospital that was sent out by British Aid for the Kurds?

It is a pity that we did not know that a statement was to be made generally about Iraq rather than in response to the two questions that have been tabled about the Kurds, Nos. 34 and 35. There is much wider concern and I am one of those who would wish to see trade being opened up with Iraq so that a devastated country can begin to be repaired.

Mrs. Chalker: It is extremely difficult, as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) knows as well as I do, to obtain a full estimate of what is needed. I can say that there is great need and that in certain pockets the situation is disastrous. That is so in the north and it is also the position of the Shias in the marshland in the south, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) can testify. Therefore, the need is still great. I made that point with considerable emphasis to Prince Sadruddin and to others whom I met in Geneva last week.

We can protect and, by means of our troops in southern Turkey, deter the recurrence of the awful things that seem to have happened in the past. We have no doubt that medicines that have been sent from Britain and many other countries have been blockaded by the Revolutionary Guard somewhere in Iraq. We know also that other materials have not yet got through but have been sent. We are doing all that we can to unblock the situation and to overcome the problem. That does not absolve Saddam

Hussein of the responsibility for looking after his own people. There is his agreement—well, not agreement because the United Nations resolutions are mandatory—when he permits the oil to flow. As soon as that happens, the people of Iraq will benefit and will cease to suffer in the disastrous way that they have for so long.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister will be aware that I visited Kurdish Iraq in August to see for myself the destruction that had taken place. The right hon. Lady has been informed of the observations that I and others made at that time. It is clear that there is an urgent need for aid to get through to the Kurdish people. What was bad in August is terrible now and it will be appalling in the middle of winter. An urgent supply of aid is desperately needed—medicines, food and building equipment, for example, to assist the Kurdish people.

When I was in Kurdish Iraq I felt that many of the aid agencies should have more confidence in working with the Kurdistan Front in the supply of aid and food to the villages and towns and in co-operating with logistical support. Those in the Kurdistan Front know the region best. They have always lived there and they are best able to advise on appropriate aid.

My final point——

Mr. Speaker: No more please.

Mr. Corbyn: My last concern, which is of great importance——

Mr. Speaker: There are others who want to participate.

Mr. Corbyn: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

Unless the Turkish army and air force desist from attacks over the border into Iraq, the security of the Kurdish people is once again threatened, not only by Saddam Hussein but by the Turkish air force.

Mrs. Chalker: To clear up the last point first, we made it clear to the Government of Turkey that the people of northern Iraq and the Kurdish people of southern Turkey should not be treated as was seen to be happening some months ago. There has been no difference between us on that.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has been in the area, as have others. There is justified concern about the Kurds facing the threat of this winter. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley has seen the position for herself.

We have been concentrating on pushing through food, shelter facilities and health care to try to avert the tragedy of the mountains, but no single Government or group of NGOs can make things happen if the Revolutionary Guard is stockpiling equipment and necessary food. Prince Sadruddin is going to Baghdad tomorrow to try to solve that problem. We send our best wishes with him; but I assure the House that we shall not let up in our attempts to help Iraqi people in both the north and south.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I thank my right hon. Friend from the bottom of my heart, on behalf of those whom I have seen in southern Iran who are refugees from Saddam Hussein's brutality against the Shia people. I thank her even more warmly for the help that she gave, in the form of food and clothing, to people who fled into the marshes. Their plight is desperate. I saw them recently in the marshes of southern Iraq and I hope to bring over one or two of the smallest victims of Saddam Husseim's brutal napalm bombing—in particular a boy of 10, who needs crucial plastic surgery.

May I ask my right hon. Friend to endorse——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please ask one question at a time? If not, they take a good deal of time from others.

Miss Nicholson: Tomorrow, the findings will be released of the interim report from Mr. Max van der Stoel, the special United Nations rapporteur on human rights in Iraq, who will present the report to the United Nations third committee. Will my right hon. Friend endorse those findings and make every effort to endorse the resolution, proposed by Belgium, which Mr. van der Stoel will present?

Mrs. Chalker: I am sure that we shall see almost total aggreement with Mr. van der Stoel's report when it is published tomorrow. I have not seen the report yet, but my hon. Friend knows me well enough to realise that we shall use the opportunity offered by it to do all that we can to further help for people in southern Iraq and those in camps in the south-west and other parts of Iran.

The situation is serious. We shall continue to support NGOs in southern Iraq and in the camps in the south-west. I congratulate my hon. Friend not only on the work that she has done, but on going to the marshes of southern Iraq and coming back with the evidence. It took some courage to do that.

Mr. Cormack: What my right hon. Friend has said this afternoon about the activities of Saddam Hussein and his lackeys in the Revolutionary Guard makes many of us extremely ashamed that no attempt has been made to bring this bestial, malevolent, satanic figure to the bar of world opinion, either by seeking to bring charges against him or by forcing him into exile. Cannot something be done? Men's lives were lost in the Gulf war. A war was fought and to what purpose?

Mrs. Chalker: The freeing of Kuwait was the objective set by the United Nations. That was successfully accomplished with—thank goodness—a minimal, although sad, loss of life.

It is extremely difficult to speculate about what will happen next. I understand my hon. Friend's grave and deeply felt anxiety and the wish of all the British people that Saddam Hussein be brought to justice. It is not in the British Government's power to do that; we must continue to work through the United Nations. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will do that with all the force at their disposal.

Sir David Steel: The Minister will have seen all the independent reports—including that of Reuters news agency—of deliberate attempts to prevent fuel, medicine and food from reaching Kurdish areas. The reports include a remarkable quotation from the health minister in Baghdad, who, tacitly, more or less admitted that that was happening.

Did the Minister discuss with Prince Sadruddin the possibility of staging a United Nations airlift of supplies, aimed directly at the area and paying for it with the frozen Iraqi funds that are in our banks?

Mrs. Chalker: Prince Sadruddin and I have indeed discussed the issue and we shall continue to discuss it when

he returns from his mission in Baghdad. We hope that, by then, the $1·6 billion worth of oil will be starting to flow: that would help more than anything else.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the continued repression of the Kurdish people and the Shia people in the south and the brutalities inflicted upon them by Saddam Hussein and his Government were entirely predictable when that Government were left in power? What would be the attitude of the Turkish authorities to humanitarian air supplies from bases in their territory?

Mrs. Chalker: The Government of Turkey then in office gave us a great deal of help earlier in the year. I am quite certain that the new Government of Turkey will give the international donor community similar help if that is the only way in which we can get assistance to the people. However, the fact remains that there is $1·6 billion-worth of Iraqi oil money that should benefit ordinary Iraqi people.

Mr. Winnick: The large numbers of Iraqi people of all kinds who are suffering so much at the moment do not question whether the war was justified—they know that it was. Rather, they are wondering why the allies left them at the tender mercy of a notorious and murderous criminal dictator. Bearing in mind the questions asked by hon. Members on both sides of the House today, if it is clear that Saddam Hussein is not going to take the necessary action to relieve the suffering which the Minister has described, will the United Nations take further measures and adopt a new resolution to ensure that the people of Iraq do not continue to suffer under that notorious dictatorship?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows me well enough to know that I will have made certain plans for the future under certain circumstances. Prince Sadruddin is going to Baghdad tomorrow; after the discussions that he and I and others have had in the past week, I believe that we must await the outcome of that visit. We sincerely hope that Saddam Hussein will see sense. Whether he does or not, we are prepared to do what is necessary for ordinary Iraqi people in future.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister know that reports today claim that 5,000 Kurdish villagers have just fled from their homes near Arbil after coming under Iraqi mortar fire and that Iraqi troops are today telling Kurds to leave or be shot? Has she heard the reports from Arbil, where I was last week and where I saw 18,000 Iraqi troops two miles away with their tanks and artillery ready to strike? Does she realise that shells like this in my hand, which I picked up from the roadside near Arbil, are being fired at the Kurds from helicopters? Clearly——

Mr. Michael Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I remember being apprehended by a previous occupant of your Chair when I brought an orange into the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: I would like that shell taken out of the Chamber please.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sorry that people are so squeamish. The shell is empty. I was making a serious point that helicopter gunships are still being used against the Kurds. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) could not take the point seriously.

Does the right hon. Lady remember that when the Prime Minister proposed a plan to protect the Kurds from further attacks by the Iraqi army, he promised to

"provide shelter and housing to the Kurds until it is safe for them to return to their own homes."

Seven months later, does she really expect us to believe that the promises to protect them and the Shias in the south are being honoured? Does she realise that the failure to honour those promises means that the United Nations agencies cannot do their job properly? Is she aware that little has changed for the refugees and that last week I saw tens of thousands of them once more on the moutainside where I was in April? They were still living in desperate conditions because they are either too frightened or unable to return to their homes in Iraq. Is she also aware that I saw hundreds of people fleeing once more in trucks, tractors and cars with their meagre possessions piled up round them?

Can the Minister urge the Prime Minister to honour his promises and ensure that the Kurds are given air cover backed by a visible will to use it until they are no longer threatened by the terror and butchery of Saddam Hussein?

Mrs. Chalker: I sincerely welcome the hon. Lady back safely to this country. Allied aircraft and men based in Turkey are having a deterrent effect. There may be a need to do more than is being done now, but, as I said to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), we must give Prince Sadruddin the chance this week to change what we believe can be changed under the existing Security Council resolutions.

There has been no failure to honour promises. This country has given more than £44 million since April alone. We have United Kingdom engineers working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in northern Iraq. Other British people are working out there at present. We have consistently inquired about the funding of the agencies. We have resources. We have been responding positively to requests from NGOs and we will continue to respond.

The hon. Lady keeps asking me whether I know this, that and the other. Of course I know. But I also know that the practicality of getting through the help that we genuinely and willingly will give Iraqi people can happen only if we can make sure that Saddam Hussein will make it happen. That is what we are engaged upon at the moment and that is what we shall do, one way or the other.

"Competing For Quality"

3.50 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): With permission, I wish to make a statement on the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", which is published today.

The citizens charter sets out a comprehensive programme to improve the quality of public services and make them answer better to the wishes of their users, where that can be done, by providing choice for the citizen. At the heart of the charter lies our commitment to provide services of the highest quality and the best value that can be bought with taxpayers' money. Extending competition is crucial to that.

The citizens charter promised a White Paper this autumn on the extension of competition and choice in the provision of public services. "Competing for Quality" fulfils that promise.

Governments of all persuasions have always bought in some services, but this Government have taken the process further. Where competition has been introduced, the results have been impressive—market testing has typically cut the cost of providing services in central Government by no less than 25 per cent.

Good managers everywhere know that they need to look both inside and outside their organisation to get the best deal for the citizens who use their services. Competition does not mean invariably choosing the cheapest service; it means combining quality and price to provide the best value for money for the service. That is what the best managers are doing. The White Paper will make it easier for them to do so.

We have already made some progress. The White Paper marks a step change in our programme for reforming the public sector. It sets out how the Government intend to extend competition in the provision of public services further and faster than ever before right across the public sector. That means providing incentives, removing obstacles, and enhancing purchasing skills—in short, it means driving competition much further into our public services.

Central Government Departments which achieve savings through competitive tendering will in future be able to apply those savings for the benefit of their programmes. Each Department and agency will set annual targets, with private sector help, for testing new areas of activity in the market. There will be a new public competition and purchasing unit in the Treasury to carry forward that work, led by a part-time chairman from the private sector, who will also be a member of the advisory panel on the citizens charter. I hope to announce that appointment before long.

Performance pay will play a crucial part in delivering the citizens charter programme. The successful application of competition to increase value for money should be an important factor in determining performance pay.

Market testing procedures in central Government have often taken far too long. They will be simplified and streamlined. In some parts of the public sector, documentation has been so unwieldy that businesses have been deterred from tendering. This will change.

Competition must be conducted fairly and openly. We shall remove tax distortions, require in-house services to be clearly costed and accounted for, and ensure that one-off costs are appraised over a realistic period. This will ensure that there will be no bias between public and private sector providers. We shall welcome suggestions from private companies on services which might be suitable for contracting out, and on ways of improving contracting out procedures.

The Government are committed to a publicly funded health service, firmly located in the public sector. None of the proposals in this White Paper will change that, but the NHS has always bought a substantial amount of services from external suppliers. We estimate that the drive to market test support services throughout the NHS has brought savings of some £626 million over the past seven years. These savings can be ploughed directly into patient care.

The White Paper sets out good practice to encourage buying in high-quality support services in hospitals, to improve direct health care for patients. We also propose that health authorities and provider units should report on their plans and achievements and that there should be a new national database on contractors for major services.

In local authorities, expanding competition through compulsory competitive tendering has shown many successes for about a decade. The White Paper sets out how we propose to take this further. It reflects the proposals which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales issued for consultation on 5 November.

Local authorities should buy the services that meet the needs of their local population, wherever the services can best be obtained. Many local authorities have responded enthusiastically to the competitive challenge. Some have led the way and have used the private sector to deliver a range of professional and technical services. We want to ensure that all local taxpayers reap these benefits. So we are consulting on proposals to extend competition under existing legislation to more manual and direct services; extend competition requirements to construction-related professional services such as architecture, engineering and property management; and in the longer term, require core services such as legal, finance, personnel and computing services to be opened up to competition. As a necessary first step, authorities would set up internal trading accounts, to identify the true costs of providing each service.

We also intend to bring forward proposals to introduce competition into the important field of housing management—in ways which will enable tenants to participate. The private sector must be given a fair chance to compete for local authority contracts. The Local Government Bill currently being considered in another place contains provisions for securing greater consistency of practice between local authorities.

Competition is good for the users of public services. It gives them a wider variety of facilities and services. Competition is good for taxpayers who get better value for their money. It is good for managers who can concentrate on their core activities, looking for the best deal for their customers. It is good for staff, who can give of their best in a more competitive environment. It is good for business, giving private firms new opportunities to market their services.

The services that we get from the public sector affect all our lives and cost a great deal of money. For that reason, services must be bought wherever the best deal can be obtained. What the Government buy matters as much as

[Mr. Francis Maude]

what they spend. This White Paper expresses our determination that the taxpayers' money which the nation can afford should buy the best quality services for our citizens. This lies at the heart of the citizen's charter and the Government's programme for public services in the 1990s.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Once again, the great expectations unleashed by the Prime Minister and the inflated claims made for the citizens charter when it was first announced have resulted in a half-baked set of proposals which will do little to improve the real quality of public services in Britain.

Is the Financial Secretary aware that, in some instances, greater competition may lead to improvements in quality, but that that does not automatically follow? Only a Government as dogmatically fixated as this one would believe that all one needs to do is introduce a market or privatise sections of service and all will be well. Is he aware that that has not been the case in large parts of the national health service, where food, cleaning and laundry services have been put out to competitive tender, and where, as a result, standards have often fallen far short of what they ought to be?

On the health service, how was the figure of £626 million of savings in seven years calculated? Is it not the case that a similar figure would result from calculating seven years' worth of tax relief for private medical insurance? Is it not also the case that the cost of one or perhaps two years' worth of the administrative introduction of the NHS changes for the internal market would again result in the same figure? How dare the Government say that they are going to improve patient care when they are wasting money so disgracefully in other parts of the health service?

On housing, what exactly does the Financial Secretary mean by the introduction of competition into housing management? Is he aware that the Institute of Housing has recently reported that it does not believe that competitive tendering in housing management is a sensible option, saying that it does

"not easily lend itself to competitive tendering"?

The Opposition strongly support tenant involvement in housing management. Labour-controlled authorities have been introducing imaginative schemes for tenant involvement for years. How on earth can the Government ensure that tenant participation takes place if they force through a tendering process which will not necessarily guarantee the tenant involvement we want?

Is the Financial Secretary aware that the introduction of more rigorous management and purchasing provisions in central Government will be welcomed by everyone, but it hardly needs a massive White Paper and a citizens charter to start the job? Surely the greatest guarantee of performance in central Government would be the guarantee of democratic access? Why do the Government still refuse to endorse the principle of freedom of information, and why do they not agree to support the freedom of information Bill which will shortly be brought before the House?

Finally, will the Financial Secretary accept that there is no dispute between us about the sheer importance of ensuring quality in our public services? Our disagreement is on how that is best achieved. Competition and privatisation are not always the guarantors of quality. Indeed, the cheapest price, which competition will principally lead to, may ensure the worst service.

The best guarantors of quality are rigorous management, open government, access to information, customer participation, clear contracts with the public which have been pioneered by a number of Labour-controlled councils, and the public sector's absolute determination to provide quality. That would be a much better way forward than this very disappointing statement.

Mr. Maude: The remarkable thing about that response was that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) failed to tell the House whether he agreed with our proposals. I take it that, as he did not say that he opposed what we are going to do, we have his wholehearted support.

The hon. Gentleman said that the proposal was half-baked. A programme that offers the prospect of harvesting efficiency savings of 25 per cent. through great swathes of the public sector does not seem to me to be half-baked. It seems to represent a programme which is extremely good value for the taxpayer and which offers the best prospects of much better services for the user.

The truth is that the Labour party does not dare come out in favour of a programme of competition of this nature because it is in hock to the very public sector unions that have sought to oppose it over the years. That is why the hon. Gentleman timidly teetered round the edge of this at the outset, saying that of course there may in some circumstances be benefits. Either the Labour party believes that competition is good for efficiency and the quality of service or it does not.

I make no bones about the Government's position: we believe firmly that, where competition can be exercised, it has a wholly beneficial effect. It enables good-quality managers and staff to test their services against the best that can be provided elsewhere. That is good for morale and for the user of services. The Labour party owes it to the House and the country to tell us freely, frankly and openly where it stands. If it does not, all its claims to be the guardian of the citizen and service user fall to nothing.

If the hon. Gentleman genuinely thinks that services that are contracted out are of lower quality than those done in house, I invite him to make the short journey between the London boroughs of Lambeth and Wandsworth. In the former, he will find services provided in house by members of the National Union of Public Employees at extremely high cost and of poor quality. Over the boundary in Wandsworth, he will find services provided by the private sector at lower cost and of much better quality.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to reflect again on his knee-jerk reaction to our proposals and to tell us frankly whether he is in favour of them and on the side of the citizen, the user of services and the taxpayer or on the side of Rodney Bickerstaffe, the Confederation of Health Service Employees and NUPE.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that, of all the White Papers that I have read in recent years, this document is one of the most detailed and practical? It shows a sensitivity that we have perhaps not always come to expect from Government Departments. The section on the management of theatres and arts facilities explains that certain community-based

facilities may be exempt and that, provided that subsidies are put up front and form part of the tender process, they may be allowed, yet it is appropriate that there should be tendering for the management of theatres such as the Derngate in Northampton. That is greatly to be welcomed. Will he re-emphasise that at the end of the day the document is all about contracting out to produce as good a service at less cost or a better service at the same price?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend puts his remarks well, and I am grateful for them. His point about subsidies being shown is an important one. To return to the point made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), this is all about transparency and opening up the process to much greater public scrutiny, so that the public can see what is going on, the taxpayer can see what his or her money is being spent on and the customer can see the standard of service being contracted to be provided. That is a good deal for both customer and taxpayer.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Financial Secretary accept that we welcome the proposals that will allow managers to buy competitively? Clearly, if that leads to lower costs and more services, we support it. How does he square the Government's commitment to allow public service managers the right to manage with compelling them to opt for competitive tendering in circumstances where, he will accept, that can be costly to prepare and can lead to inflexibility in meeting changing circumstances? Surely managers should have the right to make that decision.

Will the Minister explain why, if competitive tendering is to be encouraged as a means of securing better value for money, the national health service trusts are to be exempt from the process? Indeed, some of them are making a virtue of their exemption by saying that that is part of the reason for opting for trust status. If it is a good idea, should it not extend to all forms of public services—not just those that the Government decide?

Mr. Maude: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for expressing the support of his party for our proposals. That emphasises once again that the last redoubt of reaction in this matter is the Labour party. Just by coincidence, half its members are sponsored by the public sector trade unions—there may be a connection between the two facts.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked how the proposals will square with the delegation of management powers to the chief executives of agencies, which is a fair point to raise. The process of reform upon which we embarked some time ago runs against some ingrained attitudes in public sector management, but they are beginning to change. I have no doubt that the chief executives of agencies will want to embark upon this programme wholeheartedly. They will welcome the support that is given for that process from the centre.

As for NHS trusts, we have made it clear that we will expect them, as well as the directly managed units within the NHS, to report annually on what they have done. The hon. Gentleman will understand that the programme of NHS reforms gives managers a strong incentive to ensure that the money that they have to spend buys the very best possible. That is a strong incentive to ensure that what is being bought has been properly tested against what can be provided in the private sector. That is the way in which to maximise the amount of money that can go to buy direct patient care. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, as much as my hon. Friends, would strongly support that.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): May I make it clear to my hon. Friend that this is a document that the Labour party simply could not write, because the principle of being critical of the producer is anathema to a party that is totally in thrall to the producers? Will my hon. Friend underline the clear concept that, in terms of public expenditure, it is not what one spends but what one buys that finally counts?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that, and about the Labour party. The Opposition have given a pitifully embarrassing performance today by refusing to tell the House whether they support the programme.

We have a duty, as the authority that extracts money from the taxpayer and then spends it on buying services for the taxpayer, to ensure that every pound we spend on the taxpayers' behalf buys as much as it possibly can. Except for the last Albanians in the Labour party, I do not believe that anyone seriously disputes that the process of competition is essential to maximise what is bought for the taxpayer. Even the Liberal party has eventually come to that conclusion—even the Albanian Government have come to that conclusion. However, as in so many other things, it is only the Labour party that is still way back in the tired old 1960s.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is the Minister aware that, in Sunderland, we have recently had a taste of the Government's competition policy, because private companies have won the contracts from the local education authority to provide school meals and from the health authority to clean health centres? Those companies propose to reduce the hours of the already not well paid workers to below the level where those companies have to pay national insurance and take responsibility for pension payments, sick pay and holiday pay—all the things that we used quaintly to associate with civilisation. Will the Minister accept that many decent people will not accept cheaper services at the cost of rubbing the noses of people who are already quite-downtrodden in the dogma with which the Government have come up?

Mr. Maude: I cannot comment on the individual circumstances of the contracts.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Deal with the principle.

Mr. Maude: I will deal with the principle, since the hon. Lady invites me to.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) suggests that his primary concern is not the interests of the taxpayer who supplies the money or the customer who uses the services, but the staff who work in those services. That shows that the Labour party remains the producer party—the party in hock to producer interests. The Conservative party is concerned with the taxpayer who produces the money and with the quality of service provided to the customer. I make no apology to the House for that.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the secret of contracting out is the drawing up of a contract between those who buy a service and those who supply it, and that, together with

[Sir John Wheeler]

independent inspection, that is an essential ingredient to ensure that quality and standards are maintained in the public's interest?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Every public sector manager should be doing that, whether a service is contracted out or not. The process of putting a service to competitive tendering requires that very beneficial process. Indeed, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) made precisely that point. He is a latter-day convert to the cause. Unfortunately, like the response of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) today, his conversion is half-hearted and timid. We believe in that process; that is why we are pushing the programme forward.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is the Minister aware that he has done a useful service to the House in spelling out the inadequacies of so many of our public services after 12 years under Tory management? Will he explain something that puzzles many Opposition Members as well as many voters? Why are the Government so sensitive to our explanation of the creeping privatisation in the health service, when the tenor of his statement is of the tremendous benefits that privatisation is supposed to bring? The Opposition and the electorate at large do not believe that.

Finally, if the proposed programme is a follow-up to the citizens charter, will the Minister confirm what the Prime Minister said in a written answer to me, that the citizens charter's provisions to improve our public services promise not a penny in additional public expenditure? Like the previous blue glossy document, this blue glossy document contains Conservative party propaganda published at taxpayers' expense. How much did it cost?

Mr. Maude: On a point of information, the hon. Gentleman may have noticed that the citizens charter was not a glossy blue document but a glossy red one.

I confirm that the citizens charter is not about providing more money. As the autumn statement said, we provide more public money where it is required for key services. We have done that this year, as in previous years. The citizens charter and this White Paper, "Competing for Quality", are about ensuring that that money buys as much as it can for users of the service. It is a simple concept, and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would support it.

He is wrong if he thinks that the White Paper is about privatisation, because it is about competition. The document says explicitly that the programme implies no dogmatic preference for private over public sector, or vice versa. However, to test and ensure that as much as possible is bought with the money available, we believe that those services should be subject to fair and open competition. The Labour party's reaction shows that it is the only party with a dogmatic stance on that matter. One must assume that the reasons are connected with the fact that it is in hock to the public-sector trade unions.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does my hon. Friend agree that the great merit of the establishment of the agency programme in government is that there is now a clear distinction between the formulation of policy and its execution? Now that we have a clear emphasis on the execution of policy, the new chief executives are becoming more customer-oriented. If, in the private sector, one cannot go far wrong by putting the customer first, the same must be true of the public sector.

Mr. Maude: That is entirely right. Chief executives in the new agencies are approaching their tasks in precisely that way, which is why they will warmly welcome the new approach to competition and will work with, rather than against, the grain. Unhappily, some public authorities work against the grain. For example, Derbyshire county council set up a special panel at a cost of £300,000 of taxpayers' money specifically to combat the effect of competitive tendering. The final insult is that it is using taxpayers' money to frustrate the object of the programme, and effectively doubly robbing the Derbyshire taxpayers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard to subsequent business, so I shall allow questions to continue until 4.30. As I then have notice of an application under Standing Order No. 20, I ask for brief questions so that, hopefully, most hon. Members will be called.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): To return to the reference to services provided by local authorities, is it not a fact that compulsory competitive tendering, as designed by the Government, has failed in local authorities because the majority of contracts have been won in house, thus proving that local authorities are efficient?

I hope that the Financial Secretary will attempt to address a question of what happens when local authorities have secured an open tender that has been won by outside private contractors, who have then failed to do the job properly, so that local authorities have had to pick up the tab and carry out the services? That has happened in relation to vehicle maintenance—in Kirklees and Wakefield, contracts were given to private contractors who failed to do the job, and the local authorities had to pick up the pieces. I have asked for a meeting at which that important issue can be discussed, and I hope that the Financial Secretary can prevail on his colleagues to discuss the problem, which is costing local authorities a large amount of money. Compulsory competitive tendering has failed in local government.

Mr. Maude: The idea that compulsory competitive tendering has failed for local authorities is absurd. There have already been significant savings from the process, even where bids have been won by the in-house operation. Many local authorities have, like Derbyshire, deliberately set out to frustrate the process of running the tender scheme in such a way as to stack the odds against private sector competitors and in favour of the in-house operation. The consultation paper has been brought forward to make the process open and fair, which was necessary in the interests of local residents who would otherwise be ripped off in taxation and denied the benefits of greater quality that comes from competition.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the latest instalment of the citizens charter, which underlines the fact that it is better value for the taxpayer and the citizen. In the light of his mention of Derbyshire, is he also aware that the same public sector trade unions that pull the Labour party's policy strings

have set up a unit deliberately designed to frustrate open and free competition? Is that not an absolute disgrace, and should we not expect condemnation of that action from the Labour party, which has been quiet about today's statement? Perhaps Labour Members are going along with the statement, but they are not showing that by their comments.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Many of us have seen with dismay what some of the public sector unions have been doing as they deliberately seek ways to frustrate the will of Parliament and rob their local residents by denying them the benefits of competition. One would expect the Labour party to have some view on that, but it seems to be timid about offending its paymasters in the unions.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Some public services are utterly essential to the well-being of communities and hence need to be subidised. One such example from Scotland is the provision of passenger ferry services between the mainland and the islands, and among the islands. Throughout all other north Atlantic countries, such services continue to be subsidised, and I hope that that essential service in Scotland will not be harmed.

On page 7 of the document, it states that those who believe that they have suffered by way of the EC directive on such matters can obtain compensation by way of the High Court. Do I take it that that will apply, in Scotland, by way of the Court of Session?

Mr. Maude: I am sure that that is right: the process will apply to the Court of Session just as much as to the High Court.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point about the ferry service to the islands, we are talking about services principally provided directly from taxpayers' money, so that subsidy is not merely an element, but often the entirety, of the services' cost. Often, the services are wholly subsidised, which means that it is of the utmost importance that we should buy as much as we can with that money. That certainly does not run counter to the idea of subsidising a specific service, which is a wholly separate consideration, about which there may be a lively discussion. That policy is not in any way compromised by the measures that we propose.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that Bury health authority has already contracted out 17 services, which result in an annual saving of £750,000 for the health service? That money has already been applied to a new obstetrics unit, to the upgrading of maternity wards, and to more patient care and doctors and nurses. Can he possibly calculate how much damage would be done to my constituents if this money, because of Opposition policies were not available to my health authority?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend graphically illustrates the benefits to direct patient care that can flow from this programme, which is growing not because of a dogmatic commitment to the process, but because—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) might like to listen and learn something about this. Public-sector managers throughout the public services are increasingly seeing how they can deliver, through this process, an ever better service to their customers, patients and passengers. I would have expected the hon. Gentleman to support that.

In any event, my hon. Friend is right to say that enormous benefits in patient care can be provided by this programme. More than £600 million has already been saved—the cost of about 200,000 hip replacement operations which could not otherwise have been paid for.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Minister recall from his study of the mandarin civilisation of China that that society relegated the mercantile class—*[Interruption.]*—to a low place in society; and that the success of that mandarin civilisation is judged to have been due to the fact that it laid down regulations to ensure that the mercantile class never dominated the society? When the historians look back across history at our society, will they not judge the dark age of Thatcherism, in which competition was elevated to a supreme virtue, as a great heresy that has resulted in much misery? Have not the Government proved—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Have not the Government proved today that they are the idealogues and we are the problem solvers?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did ask for brief questions.

Mr. Maude: I am afraid that I missed much of the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's discourse, because the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) was bellowing at such a decibel rate that I could not pick it up. It sounded interesting, however. I do not know whether I am thought of within Whitehall as belonging to the mandarin class; I do not know whether I belong to the mercantile class, either. What I did hear from the hon. Gentleman was dyed-in-the-wool opposition to opening up public services to competition. He would have done better to stand up frankly and state it.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my hon. Friend accept that at last, after generations, the words "public service" will mean what they say, and not just public employment? Does it not show a lack of confidence among Opposition Members that they do not think that those in public employment can really compete? I have more faith in their members than they have.

Mr. Maude: I share my hon. Friend's confidence in the public services. He draws an important distinction between public service and public employment—they do not always necessarily go hand in hand.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): In the interests of the efficient use of taxpayers' money, will the Minister now answer directly a question that he has already been asked this afternoon: how much did "Competing for Quality" cost?

Mr. Maude: The production of the White Paper is reckoned to be recompensed from sales of the White Paper —*[Laughter.]* I am surprised that Opposition Members do not accept that, as it is the basis upon which these papers have been produced since time immemorial, under Labour as much as Conservative Governments. I think that the taxpayers will find it extremely good value for money. If the programme is put through successfully, it stands to realise billions of pounds for the use of taxpayers and users of services. It is surprising that Opposition Members do not support it, although perhaps less so in the

[Mr. Maude]

case of the hon. Lady, who is supported by COHSE and who therefore has a vested interest in opposing this sort of measure.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my hon. Friend agree that public service union bosses and their sponsored Opposition Members have no interest whatever in competition and competitive tendering but only in robbing the taxpayer for the benefit of union members?

Mr. Maude: I am sorry to have to agree with my hon. Friend. I had hoped that, when we made the statement and published the White Paper, the new so-called "modern" Labour party would make a rather more enlightened response than it has made in the past. Behind the lip service is the old Neanderthal reaction and opposition to anything that smacks of competition.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Is it not outrageous that, for many years, public-sector employees who have worked hard to deliver good service have been prevented from receiving a just reward because they are paid the same as those who do not give such a good service? It is absolutely right to introduce performance-related pay. Perhaps we can encourage Opposition Members to support that, because, even though their trade union bosses will wish to prevent them from doing so, their mailbags will be lighter as a result.

Mr. Maude: We said in the summer that the extension of performance-related pay was a crucial element in delivering the citizens charter. That remains the case. Labour has been a little diffident in saying whether it supports that, but our support for it is unequivocal.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): My hon. Friend was wise enough to refer to the experience of Wandsworth, which is my borough. Does he agree that the lesson from that borough is that competitive tendering results in increased quality and lower cost if the service is carried out by the private sector and that the same benefits accrue from efficiency savings if the service is carried out in-house? Those benefits would be lost if competitive tendering were abolished, which is the threat and the road block posed by Labour.

Mr. Maude: I am afraid that that is the case. Labour has repeatedly said, "We will abolish the Conservatives' compulsory competitive tendering regime." It has not yet explained to our citizens, who have gained greatly from the process, what will replace it, nor has it spoken about the poorer quality that will result and the higher taxes that will inevitably follow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is an application under Standing Order No. 20. I call Mr. Cormack.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on the statement.

Mr. Speaker: It may be, but I shall first hear the application.

Kurdish People

4.32 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In the light of the answers to Questions 34 and 35, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The need to take immediate action to compel Saddam Hussein to allow international assistance to the Kurdish refugees and to the civilian population of Iraq."

The matter is specific and important, as no one who heard the answers to those questions could deny. The Minister revealed the continued brutal obduracy of Saddam Hussein and the revolutionary guard. The matter deserves to take priority over the business set down either for today or tomorrow. People are suffering unspeakable hardship, entirely because of the tyrannical cruelty of a dictator who is condemned throughout the world, against whom the House has many times expressed unanimous revulsion and against whom the world went to war. It is essential that those to whom Saddam Hussein still allows no safe haven should again command not only the sympathy but the resolution of a united Parliament and its support for international action to bring a true hope of peace to a shattered country and all its unhappy people.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The need to take urgent action to compel Saddam Hussein to allow international assistance to the Kurdish refugees and to the civilian population of Iraq."

I have listened with concern to the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I have to decide whether the matter that he has raised should be given precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot rule that his application meets those requirements and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During questions on the statement, you called my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) and the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), neither of whom was here for the statement. Will you please explain the decision——

Mr. Speaker: No, I shall not explain my decision. By raising such a matter, the hon. Member is being impertinent. He must not raise such points of order just because he was not called. That will not do him any good.

Mr. Sayeed: The point of order is this. Is it normal to call hon. Members who have not heard the statement on which they are asking questions?

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not normal, and if I did so today it was in error. However, I still resent what the hon. Gentleman said.

Orders of the Day

Competition and Service (Utilities) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have expressed their sympathy for, and solidarity with, my constituents after the events of the weekend. I make it clear that this was a success for the police security operation and a failure for the IRA. I am sure that the House will agree that, had it achieved its objectives, that would simply have hardened the determination of my constituents and those of other hon. Members across the House to resist the demands of those who pursue their political objectives by the bomb instead of the ballot box.

I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill fulfils the commitments we made in the citizens charter to strengthen the position of customers of the formerly state-owned utilities. It puts the customer first by extending competition, by strengthening the powers of the regulators where monopoly remains, and by providing for compensation where standards are not met. It will give a better deal to 25 million customers. In future, customers can be confident that all the regulators will have the toughest powers to set standards, customers will have the right to be told what these standards are, customers will be told clearly what recourse they have if standards are not met, and customers will be able to ask regulators to resolve disputes with the utility.

The Bill has been welcomed by almost everybody except the Opposition. It has been welcomed by the regulators, who are pleased by their new powers. It has been welcomed by consumers, who are delighted by their new rights. It has been welcomed by the press, regardless of the party leanings of the papers.

Their headlines were unequivocal. "Customers First" said the *Daily Express*. "Better Deal for Consumers" said *The Independent*.

"Consumer Champions Will Pursue Poor Service Claims" said *The Guardian*. "Bill of Rights" said *The Observer*, and it was echoed by the *Evening Standard* today. The *Financial Times* put the general view pretty comprehensively when it said:

"The Government's aim of making utilities such as gas, water and telecommunications deal better with customers' complaints is commendable. So too are simple systems of redress which offer cash compensation when things go wrong. And independent and binding arbitration when the customer and utility fall out is clearly desirable in the absence of effective competition".

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): If that is the case, and I believe that it is, and that the Bill should be welcomed, why were these measures not introduced before privatisation rather than after consumers had suffered several years of exploitation by the private monopolies?

Mr. Lilley: That shows a misunderstanding of what has been done. The fact that we have been able to introduce the Bill is one of the successes of privatisation, and I shall explain that.

Despite the general welcome, Labour's opposition to the Bill is no surprise. The Opposition have never been a friend of the customer. They always back the producer interest against the consumer interest. They loathe competition. They were the midwives of monopoly, and they are nostalgic for nationalisation. Nationalisation always has meant, and always will mean, that the politicians, the bureaucrats and the unions come first, while the customer comes a poor fourth.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The Minister described himself as the friend of the customer. In that case, why did the Government privatise, for example, British Gas as a monopoly, and leave it in such a position that it could act as a monopoly despite the fact that it had become a private company?

Mr. Lilley: When we privatised British Gas, we took steps to introduce competition. We gave the regulator the duty to extend competition and, through the Bill, we shall extend it further. The Bill is the fruit of privatisation.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman later.

Mr. Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to follow up the point made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), I shall give way.

Mr. Brown: As for the support of the National Consumer Council, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the council has described the Bill as narrowly drawn, that it is concerned with certain areas of utility regulation only and that it fails to cover other areas that concern it, such as price regulation, regulatory accountability and consumer representation?

I ask the right hon. Gentleman a direct question that is central to the conduct of the utilities. Does he believe that, in the past year, the profits of British Telecom and those of the gas, water and electricity utilities have been excessive?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman had read the comments of the National Consumer Council, he would know that it described this measure as an "elegantly drafted Bill". The Bill, of course, covers some things and not others. That is normal. I shall deal clearly and unequivocally with pricing powers and profitability later in my speech.

Mr. Gordon Brown: On that point——

Mr. Lilley: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question, and I shall respond to it further in my own time when I come to it.

The Bill is the fruit of privatisation, which has made competition and regulation possible. When the industries were publicly owned, neither competition nor independent regulators existed, so the consumer was given a rotten deal. State ownership led to poor services and high prices. Ten years ago, when British Telecom was still nationalised,

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more than 250,000 customers were waiting over two months—many for much longer—for a new phone to be installed. Waiting lists are now non-existent. Customers are entitled to compensation if BT is late by even one day.

Before privatisation of BT we could have any type of phone installed as long as it was bakelite, basic and black. Now, the choice is huge. Over 13,000 pieces of equipment have been approved since 1981.

In the five years before privatisation, domestic gas prices increased by 2 per cent. a year in real terms. In the five years since British Gas was privatised, prices have fallen by 2 per cent. a year in real terms.

Electricity disconnections have declined rapidly since privatisation and have fallen by nearly a quarter over the past year. Regional electricity companies are now being required to produce codes of practice protecting consumers against disconnection.

The Labour party wants to return to nationalisation and we intend to build on the successes of privatisation.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Who told the right hon. Gentleman that?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman wants to know who told us what the Labour party intends to do. This document, "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change", sets out the Labour party's commitment to nationalisation, which is one that was reaffirmed and repeated by the leader of the Labour party in September.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Is my right hon. Friend not being a little too modest about prices? Is it not true that gas prices have fallen substantially, by 14 per cent., and that they are due to reduce by the retail prices index minus 5 per cent. each year from now on?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. There is so much good news that there is not room for it all in my speech.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: As I told the hon. Gentleman earlier, I shall deal with prices later in my speech.

Part I of the Bill strengthens the powers of the regulators. The Opposition profess concern about the adequacy of those powers, and I shall consider their detailed quibbles later. The stark fact is that under Labour's nationalisation there were no independent regulators. No one was specifically charged to protect the consumer. Still less was any independent body equipped with statutory powers to uphold the consumer's interest. So there was no one to cap prices, to set standards, to ensure compensation and to resolve disputes. Yet Labour wants to return to unregulated state ownership.

It is the sheerest bare-faced cheek for the Labour party to criticise alleged motes in our eye when it still has the beam of nationalisation in its eye. The reason that there were no independent regulators under nationalisation is clear. When a Government are both the owner and the putative regulator, they face an acute conflict of interest. As owners, a Government will be tempted to milk an industry for the Exchequer by allowing unjustified price rises or by deferring investment spending. In practice, a Government's responsibility towards the consumer always plays second fiddle.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I wonder whether my right hon. Friend is being wholly fair. He seems to be slightly exaggerating his case. I am sure that I have received several communications from the National Union of Pulic Employees and other such organisations—perhaps my colleagues have also received them—in which the claim is made quite passionately that they represent the consumer. Is my right hon. Friend being entirely just?

Mr. Lilley: That is probably how the Labour Government interpreted consumer interests when the industries concerned were nationalised. They put the unions, rather than the consumer, very much in charge.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: We shall hear the hon. Gentleman first and then we shall hear something from some of his hon. Friends. We can then see how their remarks compare and contrast.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for finally giving way to me to answer the question that I put to him towards the beginning of his speech. The question is central to the conduct of the utilities. Does he agree with many of the regulators, and even with stockbrokers in the City, that the profits of British Telecom, British Gas and those of the water and electricity utilities in the past year have been excessive: yes or no?

Mr. Lilley: I have told the hon. Gentleman that I am coming to that matter in my own time and in my own order within my speech.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: No. I am not giving way. If the hon. Gentleman is not prepared for me to make my speech in my own way, he had better resort to his normal practice of talking to his hon. Friends.

The Fabian Society, which is part of the Labour movement, acknowledged recently in a pamphlet that nationalisation in practice meant

"self-regulation with the help of Treasury targets."

That is why we believe that the roles of owners and regulators should be separated. Ownership should be for the private investor and regulation should be by independent bodies free from political interference. That is why we set up an independent regulator for each of the utilities that we privatised. Each is charged with promoting competition and protecting the consumer where monopoly power remains.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Is the Secretary of State satisfied with the progress that has been made so far by the regulators? He tells us that the Bill will extend their powers, but is he satisfied with what has been achieved after six years' regulation of British Telecom?

Mr. Lilley: I believe that regulation and regulators have produced a great success story and that the Bill builds on that. The system is infinitely preferable to the regime that it succeeded, when there were no regulators and no protection for the consumer.

As we have set up the regulatory system, each regulator has been given some different powers to reflect the specific circumstances of the industry concerned and experience gained from the regulators established previously. In the citizens charter we therefore promised to

"introduce legislation to bring the formal powers of each regulator in this area up to the levels of the strongest, including making sure that the regulators have adequate powers to require the award of compensation in response to legitimate customer complaints".

In most respects the electricity regulator, as the latest to be established, has the best powers. So part I brings the powers of the telecom, gas and water regulators up to the level of that of the electricity regulator. In addition, all the regulators are to be given some new powers to implement our other citizens charter pledges, notably on complaints handling procedures and dispute resolution.

In upgrading and formalising the powers we are building on success. The regulators have all made considerable advances with their existing powers in setting standards, ensuring compensation and resolving disputes. They have all sought to ensure that the quality of service offered by the utilities matches what would be provided in a competitive market. As a result, all the utilities operate consumer service guarantee schemes. Domestic consumers are now entitled to compensation of one month's line rental charge for each day that BT falls short of its targets for the installation and repair of telephones.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend has referred to the dramatic improvements in British Telecom and many of the other utilities with which the Bill is concerned. Everyone is aware of those improvements. Does he agree that the key to the future is increasing competition for all of the utilities? As competition is increased—probably over a longish period—regulation can be eased off to seek to maximise profitability.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why we have given the regulators a duty to promote and encourage competition. I shall list the areas in which, as a result of that, we are able to increase competition when I deal with part II of the Bill. Our success in that regard will be welcome to everyone in the country except those in the Labour movement.

Ofgas has recently agreed with British Gas a comprehensive new package of key standards which will come into force in April 1992. It includes compensation for individual customers if, for example British Gas fails to keep an appointment. British Gas has halved the number of disconnections since privatisation, and the electricity regulator has made it clear that reducing the number is a priority. As a result, disconnections are at their lowest level for 15 years.

New service standards for the electricity companies came into force on 1 July this year. Failure to comply with those standards will result in compensation of between £10 and £50 for individual customers. In the water industry, a scheme has been agreed setting out customers' rights on appointments, account queries, complaints and interruptions to water supply. It is coupled with a swift, no-nonsense compensation scheme. The regulators have achieved their progress through a combination of their powers under primary legislation, licence conditions and informal arm-twisting.

It is significant that a recent survey on behalf of the National Consumer Council found that consumer satisfaction with telecommunications, gas, electricity and water was notably greater than satisfaction with utilities that were still in the public sector.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Why will the water regulator not allow consumers to choose between being charged for the water they use and being charged on the basis of rateable values?

Mr. Lilley: That is not entirely a matter for the regulator.

Support for our regulatory system has come from across the political spectrum. In another pamphlet, entitled "Telecommunications in the United Kingdom", the Fabian Society described the Government's policies as "bold and radical", adding:

"Most would agree that the creation of Oftel has been good for the consumer and few would wish to go back to the days when British Telecom operated without an independent regulator."

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The introduction of part I—which, as my right hon. Friend has said, strengthens the powers of regulators, including Oftel—coincides with the Treasury's sale of a large tranche of British Telecom shares. What attitude will the Government take to any amendments that might be tabled whose effect would be a change in the balance between the regulator and the company?

Mr. Lilley: That is an important point, with which I dealt in a press release at the time of First Reading. I am happy to reaffirm what I said then.

I have made clear our position in relation to the forthcoming BT sale. It is clearly right for potential investors to be fully informed, and clarification amendments to the Bill cannot be ruled out. The Government do not, however, intend to make any amendments that would have a direct financial impact on BT's profitability. They will also resist any amendments tabled by others that would have that effect.

As a result of the Bill, all the regulators will have statutory powers to take five major steps. They will have powers to set overall performance standards; to set guaranteed service standards for individuals; to establish compensation where service for individuals falls below those standards; to ensure that utilities establish and publicise complaints procedures; and to resolve disputes over standards. In addition, the Government are taking powers to enable the regulators to resolve disputes over bills.

In a plethora of press statements over the past day or so, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has suggested the appointment of an ombudsman to deal with complaints and standards. That is a typically misconceived idea: in fact, it would markedly reduce the level of consumer protection.

The regulators already have far greater power than those possessed by any ombudsman. As a result of the Bill, they will have even greater powers. In particular, they can take into account the success or failure of utilities in meeting standards when they fix the price cap. A separate ombudsman could not do that, as, by definition, he would not set prices. He would have less power than the regulators to achieve results.

I am afraid that most of the hon. Gentleman's other suggestions are of a like nature. Either they are ineffective, or they have been looted from our own proposals. At the end of the war, when the Red Army occupied parts of western Europe, some of the soldiers removed almost everything from the houses that they occupied—including the taps—and took them back to the steppes in the hope

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that, by installing them in their homes, they would ensure a supply of fresh water. Similarly, Labour believes that, by removing some of the fixtures and fittings from our regulators and attaching them to nationalisation, they can protect the consumer. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): In his reply to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), the Secretary of State made it clear that he was putting the shareholder first, rather than the consumer, in the sale of the extra tranche of BT shares.

The deferment of shareholders' interim dividend until 28 February will mean that those who have acquired shares through the additional sale will receive a dividend on shares that they did not hold at the time when the dividend should have been paid. Moreover, a City stockbroker has told me that the Government will lose £77 million as a result of the deferment of the dividend. That money could have been used to build a hospital, or invested in schools, housing and a number of projects. Is not the Secretary of State simply giving it away to sweeten the additional privatisation?

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is handling the sale efficiently and in the best interests of the taxpayer. We have already installed a regime that effectively protects the interests of BT's consumers. Earlier this year we announced a full-scale duopoly review, which led, and will continue to lead, to an extension of competition in the market, and which will give us the most competitive telecommunications market in the world. We have done all that ahead of the sale, and the shareholders are well aware of what we have done. By and large, all in the industry welcome our actions, because competition enlarges the very market in which all participants take part.

Clause 15 empowers Ofgas to set standards of performance for gas suppliers on the promotion of efficient use of gas by consumers. The electricity regulator already has powers relating to energy efficiency. We recognise that improving energy efficiency is the quickest and most cost-effective way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions: that is why we are giving the Director General of Gas Supply stronger powers in that regard.

The Bill gives statutory backing to the code of practice agreed by British Gas and Ofgas on energy efficiency. The code covers, for example, the labelling of appliances in British Gas showrooms, and comprehensive advice for British Gas customers on the efficient use of energy. I know that the House will welcome that.

Our whole approach to regulation is aimed at achieving a balance between two objectives: first, the protection of the customer from the abuse of monopoly power, and, secondly, the minimising of the burden of regulation and the avoidance of political interference in the affairs of the industries involved. We believe that those objectives are best achieved by the focusing of regulatory powers on the end results that matter most to consumers—competitive prices, and standards of service. That is what customers are really concerned about.

Labour wants to extend controls beyond those end results to intermediate objectives such as boardroom pay and profits. We believe that that would be damaging to the utilities and counter-productive for consumers, and that it would politicise the whole regulatory process.

Our system of capping the annual price increase of each utility has been widely acclaimed. In the case of gas and telecommunications, the caps have been set well below the level of inflation. As the *Financial Times* has said:

"The UK model of control over prices has been a largely successful spin-off from the privatisation programme. A steady stream of visitors from North America have found much to commend it in comparison with their own bloated bureaucracies."

Under our system, the regulators set the cap in the light of productivity gains that they believe the utility should be able to achieve and the need to protect customers against unjustified price increases. Utilities can then increase their profits only by increasing their efficiency even more rapidly than the target set for them. Moreover, the regulators have progressively set more demanding productivity targets each time the cap is renewed. For example, British Gas has been required to cut prices in real terms by 2 per cent. a year. That was a marked improvement on price increases averaging more than 2 per cent. above inflation in the five years before privatisation. As has been said, from April British Gas will be required to do better still and cut its prices by 5 per cent. in real terms each year.

Likewise, British Telecom has seen its price cap tightened successively from 3 per cent. below inflation to 4·5 per cent. below and now 6·25 per cent. less than inflation each year. Given inflation running at under 4 per cent., that means that prices will have to be cut in money terms. I doubt whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East can name any other country requiring such large real price cuts by its utilities. However, he is not interested in prices. He is interested only in profits and boardroom pay.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: No. The right hon. Gentleman's Front Bench colleagues urged me to reach this subject, and I have done so.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East interrupts when I am making my speech and also when I am answering questions. I suggest that he listens, and he will then learn a lot.

The only alternative approaches to our system of capping prices are to follow the rate-of-return approach adopted in America, which simply encourages over-investment because the more that is invested, the more prices can be raised to provide the guaranteed returns, which by common consent is wasteful; or prices can be set by arbitrary political intervention as they have been in eastern Europe. That seems to be the approach prescribed by the Opposition and it is indefensible in theory and discredited in practice.

It would give me and the House exquisite pleasure to hear from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East how he could justify moving either to the American's wasteful, bloated and bureaucratic system of rate-of-return control or the east European arbitrary approach to regulating prices in preference to our own. Sadly, we know from experience that the hon. Gentleman never deigns to elaborate on his policies—for reasons that we fully understand.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Secretary of State aware that Sir Bryan Carsberg, the regulator for Oftel, has proposed that prices should be cut where profits are too high? He wants to share the benefit of excess profits with the consumer. Will the Secretary of State answer the direct question that I put to him? Does he believe that the profits for BT, gas, water and electricity have been excessive?

Mr. Lilley: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman welcomes our regulatory system and the attitudes of the regulators who we have put in place. I join him in paying tribute to them.

So long as we retain our system of capping prices, the proposal of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to control directors' salaries makes little sense. Those salaries are a matter for the private shareholders. If they choose to pay over the odds, that will come out of shareholders' funds. The excess cannot be passed on to the customer in higher prices, because prices are firmly capped by the regulator. The Government most certainly do not endorse some of the pay increases that shareholders have agreed to finance; but equally certainly, we do not wish, and nor do the regulators, to get drawn into the business of setting managerial pay.

Suppose the regulators were forced to set a pay rate for the chairmen and directors of each utility and the board of a utility then wished to recruit someone from another company where he already earned more than that level. Is it really the job of the regulator to stand in the board's way? Only a party such as the Labour party, obsessed with envy, malice and greed, could seriously make that a major plank of its policy, let alone the major plank.

Important though regulation is, the best way to improve standards of service is to increase competition.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Is my right hon. Friend aware that clause 32 will be particularly welcome with respect to increasing competition in gas because it allows the threshold of 25,000 therms to be removed or lowered? Is he aware that half a million industrial and commercial customers have been trapped in that domestic tariff, have not been allowed to shop around for contracts and cannot aggregate their multiple sites? Will he ensure that clause 32 is implemented as soon as possible?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. He is absolutely right. Many small and medium-sized businesses are looking forward to the contents of the Bill eagerly and they will be interested to hear the reactions of the Opposition in respect of clause 32.

Competition is now firmly established in electricity, telecommunications and for large industrial users of gas. Part II of the Bill includes new measures, as my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) said, to increase competition in the supply of gas and of water services. At present, only British Gas has the right to supply householders and small firms who use less than 25,000 therms a year. As my hon. Friend said, clause 32 takes powers to end that monopoly. I challenge the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to say whether he supports the abolition of that monopoly or whether he wishes to retain it like his union friends and paymasters. The hon. Gentleman is often keen to intervene and I would happily give way to him on this issue. As he does not want to intervene, it seems that he does not know. He has not received his orders yet. No doubt they will be in the post.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who may be more daring.

Mr. Flynn: With regard to hon. Members' paymasters, is the Secretary of State aware that a book entitled "MPs for Hire" proved that less than 14 per cent. of Labour Members received remunerations from trade unions while 85 per cent. of Conservative Members who are eligible to receive money, receive money from consultancies outside this place? The Conservative party is the party with paymasters outside this House.

Mr. Lilley: Quite a lot of Opposition Members receive help from their union paymasters direct and I believe that some of those who have spoken today are included. They rarely bother to declare that interest during debates.

Mr. Gordon Brown: We will not in principle oppose the clause on gas so the Secretary of State should withdraw his allegation that any decision taken by the Labour party has anything to do with what the trades unions have told us.

Will he explain his allegation that individual Labour Members are receiving cash from trades unions? Is it not the case that hon. Members like me, who are sponsored by a trade union, receive no cash? Is it not also the case that that cannot be said for Conservative Members when 800 directorships and consultancies are shared among Conservative Back Benchers?

Mr. Lilley: I am happy to take the hon. Gentleman's assurance about the way in which the money from trade unions is channelled. I have not suggested, would not suggest and have never been known from the Dispatch Box to suggest, any impropriety on the part of any hon. Member. I simply remarked that Labour Members are silent about the relationship between whatever funds that money goes into and their relationship with their trade unions.

Mr. Lewis: *rose*——

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I do not know what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is getting so excited about. I have said that I am not accusing him. Methinks the hon. Gentleman doth protest too much.

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley: I was going to give way to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), but he seems to have given up trying to intervene.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman cannot make up his mind——

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Secretary of State has indicated that he will not give way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lilley: Is that remark in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Secretary Lilley.

Mr. Lilley: I did not realise that there was anything sensitive about trade unions giving money to Labour Members.

Mr. Gordon Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman made two allegations. First, he said that Labour Members' decisions were dictated by our paymasters. Secondly, he said that we were entirely silent about our relationship with individual trade unions. I have made it absolutely clear that, while I am an individual Member sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, like my colleagues I receive no money as an individual from it. Therefore, there is no question of our being silent about a public relationship. The right hon. Gentleman must explain the relationship between his colleagues and individual consultancies and directorships.

Mr. Lilley: There we are. I think that I heard the hon. Gentleman, in all his bluster and attempts to disguse and hide it, say that he is actually going to support clause 32, despite the fact that that will get him into some hot water with his trade union friends, and we shall be very interested in that.

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall not give way. I will make a little progress, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

Mr. Lewis: It is a genuine intervention.

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman will permit, I shall continue.

I would expect the initial reduction that we shall make when we take the powers to be to a level not less than 2,500 therms, which will take place in the next Parliament. That approach is in line with our phased introduction of competition in electricity, where the 1 MW monopoly threshold is to be reduced to a tenth of that size in 1994. The new threshold will enable many new customers to benefit from competition by allowing them the same right as big firms—that is, to buy gas from anyone, on better terms, and at lower prices. Such a reduction would open up about 7 per cent. of British Gas's market to competition, allowing competitors to develop their systems for supply to smaller customers. After that, the next step will be a review in 1996 to determine the date at which the monopoly will end, opening the rest of the market to competition.

Mr. Rost: My right hon. Friend referred to smaller firms being given the same opportunities as bigger firms to shop around for contracts. Is he aware that many of the biggest firms are trapped with the 25,000 therms limit? I refer to firms with multiple outlets—large retail organisations—which consume less than 25,000 therms but, on aggregate, are some of the largest gas consumers. Such companies are being penalised. Not only small firms but some of the biggest consumers will be released.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I am grateful to him for putting that point clearly on the record. That is why we are in the business of progressively removing the monopoly threshold. As my hon. Friend says, that will be welcomed by all categories of consumer, big and small.

A couple of electricity companies have already expressed interest in competing with British Gas in supplying gas to households. There are a number of other provisions in the Gas Act 1986 subject to the 25,000 therms threshold, including British Gas's obligation to supply to all customers below that level, and British Gas's obligation to offer non-discriminatory tariffs. Those statutory obligations will remain in place to protect all consumers of less than 25,000 therms until competition has developed sufficiently to provide a viable alternative.

The statutory rights of smaller customers to a supply of gas at a fair price will remain as long as competition is limited. We shall not reduce those thresholds until we are satisfied that competition has developed fully. When that has happened, British Gas should be placed on an equal footing with its competitors, in terms of its obligations. I am confident that the reduction in the supply threshold will make a significant contribution towards greater competition in the gas market.

The scope for competition in water is more limited than for other utilities. This is why, when we privatised water, we focused on comparative competition. That relies on comparisons between neighbouring water companies to act as the spur to greater efficiency. But we believe that there is greater scope for actual competition between water companies. Clauses 34 to 41 will therefore let water companies compete more effectively to supply new estates and large users, to buy in water supplies and to offer a better deal.

Water companies have been effectively prevented from competing in each other's areas for new or existing customers within 30 m of the existing company's pipes. Clause 34 abolishes the 30 m restriction on so-called "inset appointments"—appointments to supply water in an area where there is already an existing appointed supplier.

The will to compete in water already exists. There have been approaches to the Office of Water Services for appointments to supply water to new sites in another company's area. The Bill will remove some of the obstacles which are preventing enterprising companies from competing in new areas. Large customers will benefit from greater choice, and all customers will benefit from increased efficiency as a result of competition.

I leave three questions with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. First, does he still stand by his party's commitment in "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change", which states:

> "We are clear that the great utilities cannot safely be left as monopolies in private hands. The consumer interest in particular demands that the accountability and social responsibility provided by common ownership must be secured."

Perhaps he could give us a yes or no answer to that question. Secondly, if he is deferring his threat to nationalise British Telecom, is he still determined to pursue the far worse threat of taking control by statutory means without any financial compensation?

Thirdly, why are Labour Members persisting in their threats to nationalise water and the national grid at a cost of about £10 billion, when they frankly acknowledge that the cost of renationalising BT might be too expensive? How will they be able to continue to finance the £28 billion investment programme in water if they have already disbursed £10 billion or £9 billion on renationalising the water companies? The House has a right to answers to those questions. If we do not get them today, we will continue to demand them.

I have described the excellent progress made to date by the regulators in promoting standards of service and competition. I have made it clear that some of the standards set out in the citizens charter are already being achieved by the utilities, often voluntarily. The new powers that we have introduced reflect good business practice. The Bill will be of significant benefit to consumers. It will deliver the pledges that we made in the citizens charter. It will go a long way towards meeting rising public expectations of the utilities. The Bill ensures that customers of the regulated utilities will get a better deal, have more choice, enjoy higher standards, be better informed, and have proper rights of redress. I commend it to the House.

5.17 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to establish independent consumer ombudsmen; fails to strengthen consumer representation; fails to give sufficient priority to energy saving and environmental protection; fails to take action where there are excess profits; and does nothing to prevent privatised boardroom salary excesses."

In view of the widespread concern about the standards of consumer service, which is reflected in the large number of complaints, consensus on the need to strengthen consumer representation, a demand that we create ombudsmen, and widespread pressure to take action on excess profits and on privatised boardroom salary excesses, the Bill offers too little, is too limited and is too long delayed. It is not the most that could be done to protect the consumer, but the least that the Government thought that they could get away with. Their failure to take action on the essential measures that we have proposed is a confirmation of the power of the privatised vested interest rather than the promised assault upon them.

There are to be no statutory ombudsmen or ombudswomen to represent the consumer, despite the Government's admission in their document entitled "Citizens Charter Implications for the Regulators of Privatised Utilities":

"The principal advantage of introducing ombudsmen for each of the utilities is that they are seen by the public to be impartial and independent of all parties."

Yet nothing is done. There are to be no improvements in consumer representation, simply because—I quote the same document:

"It would be more difficult to secure the support of other Departments to a major change . . . so soon after privatisation".

As the consumer associations and others have said, the result is that consumer representation in most of the utilities is completely inadequate. There are to be no changes in the price formula, despite widespread dissatisfaction with the pricing policies of our utilities and representations from many consumer bodies.

There is to be no widespread review of the prices, profits and performance of the utilities, despite the original proposal in the Government's draft document issued before the publication of the citizens charter:

"The Government will therefore in consultation with the regulators review the performance of the utility companies . . . the results of the review willl be published".

None of that is in the Bill. None of that is promised by the Government.

While the Government have to admit that, after pursuit of the policy of privatisation for 12 years, substantial problems have arisen that must be corrected, the best that they can propose is that Ofwat, Ofgas and Oftel should be raised to the standard of OFFER, the Office of Electricity Regulation, as if OFFER were the champion of the consumer against the might of near-monopoly power. I suspect that OFFER is hardly a household name, even in the Prime Minister's household.

The citizens charter was advertised as

"a revolution in services . . . one of the central themes of public life in the nineties . . . a transformation of our services".

It was to be the big idea. The best that the Government can do is propose to bring the worst regulator up to the standard of the inadequate, when we need regulation aspiring to the standards of the best.

I have checked on how the public can contact OFFER.

Mr. Lilley: An ombudsman would, by definition, have fewer powers than OFFER because he could not determine prices. How can the hon. Gentleman say that OFFER's powers are inadequate when he proposes to set up a less adequate body instead?

Mr. Brown: Under our proposals, the powers of the ombudsman would be first, to impose penalty fines; secondly, to determine whether contracts are fair and not merely whether they are fairly interpreted; thirdly, to make recommendations about customer services to the regulator; and fourthly, to insist on consumers' rights to information. I will tell the right hon. Gentleman why he resisted the demand for an ombudsman. I shall read from the document that his Department wrote for him when the case for an ombudsman was examined in detail. It said:

"There is also an argument that it is desirable ideally to separate the function of economic regulation and investigation of complaints."

The Department accepted that there was an argument. It said:

"Ombudsmen would be seen by the public to be impartial and independent."

The problem was that legislation to empower an ombudsman to determine settlements would

"qualify contract law and might therefore be politically controversial."

That is why the Government rejected the idea for ombudsmen. It was not because they thought that services to the consumer would be better; they were put off because ombudsmen might have powers that would interfere with the conduct of the privatised utilities.

I will tell the Secretary of State what most reveals the Government's attitude to citizens' and consumers' rights. It is that, as a matter of principle, and as he confirmed earlier, no improvements are to be made to the Bill in Committee or at any point during discussion of the Bill which might significantly strengthen rights and representational services, if they affect the profitability of British Telecom.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands the legal status of a prospectus and the nature of the commitments that are given to people who are considering buying shares. If not, he is not fit to be Secretary of State or anything else. May I ask him about the record of the past 10 years? Does he accept that a combination of privatisation and liberalisation in

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telecommunications has resulted in a huge improvement in the quality of service to the customer? The regulator Oftel has done an excellent job for the consumer.

Mr. Brown: There were 38,000 complaints to Oftel last year and half a million billing disputes. I will answer the hon. Gentleman directly on BT's prospectus. It was the Government who chose to publish the prospectus and the Bill at the same time. I will tell the hon. Gentleman what the Government decided when consumer rights were set against the dogma of privatisation: privatisation had to come first—then and every time.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the assertion of his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that Labour will return the public utilities to public ownership, where he says they should be? Which utilities and at what cost?

Mr. Brown: Our proposals are set out clearly in "Opportunity Britain" which came before the annual conference. The hon. Gentleman can purchase a document if he so wishes. I am surprised that he bothers to continue to ask exactly the same questions as the Secretary of State put to me, and as we are asked in every debate.

Let us deal with the central issue of the Bill. Two Fridays ago the Secretary of State held a press conference to announce the publication of the Bill and what he called "a great advance in consumer rights".

Did he tell us that he would listen to the consumer organisations—which, incidentally, he barely consulted during the preparation of the Bill? Did he say that he would be prepared to improve the Bill by accepting proposals that might be made, even by Conservative Members? Did he say that he could be persuaded about the merits of new rights or new services that might enhance the power of the consumer? No. He made it absolutely clear that he would resist

"any amendments to the Bill during its passage through the House which would have a direct financial impact on BT's profitability. The Government will also resist any amendments tabled by others which would have this effect."

For the Government the consumer comes second and privatisation of British Telecom comes first.

The Government may talk about consumer rights and say that consumer redress is fine. They produce charters at taxpayers' expense, but if a measure interferes with British Telecom's profits and the Government's privatisation agenda, it counts for nothing. The guiding principle is the protection not of the British consumer, but of British Telecom's profits. That was stated even at a press conference called by the Secretary of State to advertise the flagship proposals of the citizens charter. That is the basic problem with the Bill.

Even when there is a growing consensus about the need for better consumer representation and for ombudsmen and the need to take further action than that which is proposed in the Bill on energy efficiency and setting environmental standards, even when there is anger about privatised boardroom salaries, excess profits and utility prices in many areas, and even when the Government say that they are taking action to safeguard the consumer, the old agenda of privatisation comes before the new agenda of consumer rights for millions of people. It is privatisation irrespective of the consequences for standards, efficiency, speed and reliability of service and, of course, prices for the consumer. The Bill does nothing about excess profits.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman seems to be obsessed with British Telecom's profits. Will he reflect on the fact that British Telecom's prices have fallen by about 27 per cent. since it was privatised? Would a future Labour Government, if there ever were one, revert to having a Minister for Prices? I recollect Mrs. Shirley Williams saying that she was proud that, since she had become Minister for Prices, profits in British industry were the lowest that they had ever been. That seemed to reflect a common attitude in the Labour party. Is it still the Labour party's attitude?

Mr. Brown: Under the last Labour Government, real prices of telecommunications fell. Despite all the Secretary of State's rhetoric, prices for telecommunications, gas, water and electricity have risen in real terms under the Conservative Government.

Mr. Lilley: As that remark is factually wrong, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will withdraw it. Telecommunications prices have fallen by 27 per cent. in real terms since the privatisation of British Telecom.

Mr. Brown: I have material from the House of Commons Library which shows price rises for utilities. Since 1979, telephone charges have risen by 148·8 per cent. compared with a rise in the retail prices index of 145·9 per cent.

Although the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) says that the consumer is getting a better deal, in its prospectus——

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I am answering the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West. In its prospectus, British Telecom makes it absolutely clear that there will be an increase of 4·9 per cent. in the median residential customer's bill in the coming year.

The Bill does nothing about excess profits, about improvements in the price cap, about additional price cuts, and about the perks and salary abuses that are disfiguring the conduct of our privatised industries. If anything sums up the Government's failure to take on vested interests, it is the inaction over boardroom salary bonanzas, which have been happening year after year and month after month.

Let us be clear about the number of complaints about the utilities. At the last count there have been 38,000 customer complaints to Oftel, 4,500 complaints about water since privatisation, 14,000 about electricity, and 102,000 complaints to the Gas Consumers Council about gas. That is merely the tip of the iceberg, as the Government's citizens charter draft document said that there was a rising level of public concern and disatisfaction.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It would be helpful to the House if the hon. Gentleman would confirm whether the Labour party, if it were elected to government, would nationalise the water industry. All he has said is that, in the conduct of the utilities, the Labour party would be careful to ensure that no excessive price increases occured and that therefore margins would be reduced. How would he finance the water authorities' capital expenditure

programme, which is now £28,000 million? What would be the effect on the public sector borrowing requirement, and what does he think that makes of the Labour party's credibility?

Mr. Brown: We made it absolutely clear that we would not spend money that the country could not afford. In time, we are committed to bringing water under regional authorities, not into national ownership.

Mr. Knapman: That is laughable.

Mr. Brown: I will tell the hon. Gentleman why that idea is not laughable, as he has suggested. It is exactly what happens in Scotland, where water is under local authority control.

Let me tell the House what Conservative party supporters have to say about privatisation. A survey in July showed that only 9 per cent. of Conservative supporters—the very people that the Secretary of State should have been able to persuade—believed that gas had improved with privatisation, only 14 per cent. thought that telephones had improved, only 6 per cent. believed that electricity had improved and only 5 per cent. believed that water had improved. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. Even in its worst days, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the previous Prime Minister could secure greater support for the poll tax than the Secretary of State can secure for improvements to the utilities.

What has happened within the utilities as the complaints have mounted? Do directors take action to deal with the complaints? Do they cut prices and recognise that something should be done? No, having pushed up their salaries last year and the year before, they push their salaries upwards again, ignoring all the complaints about last year's rises. They have given themselves bigger rises this year, the year of recession.

Mr. Lewis: Perhaps one of the worst features of the boardroom abuses is the ease with which the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) moved from being the Secretary of State who privatised British Telecom to non-executive position on its board, one of whose functions is to set the salaries of board members, including the chairman, whose function is to increase the salaries of non-executive directors. If that is not corruption with a small "c", I do not know what is. When I compare that with Opposition Members who are supported by trade unions, I think that Conservative Members should shut up.

Mr. Brown: It is interesting that Conservative Members complain about industries that were run by Ministers before privatisation, but they do not complain about privatised companies run by ex-Ministers—the people who privatised them in the first place.

What has been allowed to happen in the privatised industries? There have been 14,000 complaints about electricity yet a few weeks ago the chairman of PowerGen was awarded an extra £30,000 from 1 April, on top of his rise last year—a 15 per cent. rise to £230,000. What did the Secretary of State for Energy say, or do? Absolutely nothing.

A few weeks ago the chairman of Scottish Power awarded himself a £47,000 rise and his chief executive got a £96,000 rise, on top of rises that took place last year. The Secretary of State for Scotland said and did absolutely nothing.

The chief executive of Scottish Hydro-Electric had an extra £89,000, a 102 per cent. rise, during 1991, and the chairman had a 248 per cent. rise. What did the Secretary of State for Scotland say? Absolutely nothing.

There have been 4,500 complaints about water, a seventyfold rise since privatisation, but what have the chairmen of the water companies done? They have awarded themselves higher rises: Wessex Water, £12,000 or 30 per cent.; Northumbria Water 37 per cent.; North West Water 37 per cent.; South West Water 15 per cent.; and Anglia Water 28·6 per cent.. What does the Secretary of State for Environment say or do? Absolutely nothing. The chairman of Welsh Water awarded himself a 12 per cent. rise, but the Secretary of State for Wales was absolutely silent. The same Ministers are ready to attack the award of a minimum wage of £3·40 an hour to people who are on poverty pay, while they say nothing about people who earn more in a single day than some low-paid workers would earn in a year.

Those are not catch-up increases, justified as one-off boosts for newly privatised bosses. They are taking place year in and year out in year one, two, three, four and five of privatisation. Except perhaps inversely, they are unrelated to standards of service and to levels of consumer satisfaction. What does the Prime Minister do to show us how that advances the concept of a classless society? Absolutely nothing.

What about British Gas, which is perhaps the most interesting case of all? A fortnight ago Mr. Robert Evans, the chairman, awarded himself another £60,000 rise, on top of his £60,000 rise last year, taking his salary to £340,000 this year, a 21·4 per cent. increase, before his performance-related bonus. On top of that, his share options are now worth a windfall £99,000. Of course, money is not everything—there was also the refurbishment of his rent-free London flat, including the installation of gold taps in the bathroom. A private pipeline a mile long has linked his own home in Bournemouth to the grid. He has £25,000-worth of gas fitments on loan, including a tumble dryer, a gas fire, a gas-powered dishwasher, an oven, a grill, a cooker hob and a gas-fired Aga cooker. Is that to persuade other millionaires in the neighbourhood of the merits of gas, or just in case Joan Collins drops in with a camera crew? He has the equivalent of a gas showroom in his sitting room, his bedroom and his various bathrooms: four showers and five gas lights.

Most lavish of all is the gas supply to the garden, a unique stock of gas-fired garden amenities. He has a gas-fired barbecue and, to illuminate the gas-powered idyll, a collection of Victorian gas lamps costing £8,000, in period standards—at last, amid this sorry tale of affluence and greed, the long-awaited return to Victorian standards, sadly in this instance at the public's expense. What did the Energy Secretary say or do? Absolutely nothing. There is a warning from the Government on every privatisation prospectus for a public utility that shares can go down as well as up. Another warning is needed—a warning from the Opposition that "directors' salaries can only go up under the Government."

Is that what the Prime Minister means by opportunity for all? The real message from Bournemouth and from elsewhere is serious and general—that for 12 years, when we needed a real citizens charter, we have had a directors

[Mr. Brown]

charter for the privatised boardrooms, unpublished but nevertheless pervasive and wholly effective—a directors charter against which the citizens charter is unfortunately nothing but a feeble gesture and against which the Bill represents no significant redress.

Mr. Tim Smith: I was not quite clear about what the hon. Gentleman was saying. Would a Labour Government interfere to fix the salaries of directors of private companies? Is not that a matter for shareholders, especially institutional shareholders? Why does he not encourage trade union pensions funds, which are among the largest shareholders, to take more interest in all this?

Mr. Brown: I am impressed by one of the proposals from Sir Bryan Carsberg. There is no question of the Government setting directors' pay, but there is a case for the regulator to be involved in it. If the hon. Gentleman studies Sir Bryan Carsberg's proposal and other proposals that would link performance to pay, which does not happen now, he will see that we would do a lot better. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, because it has allowed me to clarify the point. He and many of his hon. Friends will agree that something must be done.

There were 38,000 complaints about British Telecom. When the privatisation roadshow reached Edinburgh last week, people who wrote about the way in which the chairman behaved when talking about consumer rights said that he took them on in "an offhand manner". The last published figures showed that, in one year, BT had to deal with half a million billing disputes—2 per cent. of its customers. BT's answer was not to improve the service but to stop publishing the figures, so that we cannot get them.

Nevertheless, a month ago, Mr. Iain Vallance, on top of last year's extraordinary salary rise, awarded himself an additional £64,000—a 16 per cent. rise—to £450,000. What did Ministers say? Absolutely nothing. On top of that came a bonus which could approach £175,000, yet Ministers say absolutely nothing. On top of that, and perhaps even worse, his new deputy was given a salary of £400,000 plus £118,000 of performance-related pay, promised even before he had done his first day's work. Surely that is not so much performance-related pay as appearance money. Between them, five top executives received £2 million in one year alone, yet Ministers do absolutely nothing.

When BT bosses reel off figures, we do not know whether they are talking about telephone numbers or their salaries, because the numbers are roughly the same. In the world of the new citizens charter, it seems that some citizens are far more equal than others. The chairman of BT had the audacity to tell his shareholders at the last annual general meeting that nearly 10 million customers were "unprofitable" for BT. The directors tell us that they cannot afford the customers. The truth is that millions of customers cannot afford the price that they are paying for those directors.

What did Mr. Vallance say when he was pressed about the salaries? We know that the Telecom boss in Germany receives £150,000, in France £120,000 and in Japan £100,000, yet Mr. Vallance receives four or five times as much. When he was asked why he got such a large salary, he said:

"This is compensation for appearing on the front page of the tabloids. This is a high profile job."

If Mr. Vallance is to bear the heat of *The Sun* for being the chairman, what about his deputy chairman? Is he being compensated against the possibility of a small mention on the back pages of the *Financial Times*? Are the other directors being compensated for the risk of their names appearing in *Accountancy Age*? Perhaps soon they will receive compensation for having to appear in the telephone book itself.

As everybody knows, those rises are completely unrelated to the standards of service. Last Thursday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer called for reasonable levels of pay settlement. In gas, the percentage rise is more than 30 per cent., in electricity generation alone it is above 50 per cent., in water it is about 20 per cent. and in British Telecom it is even higher than that. What does the Chancellor now say? Why is he silent about these abuses in the boardrooms?

Who has benefited most of all from privatisation? Is it the customer, hundreds of thousands of whom have increased complaints about the services, recording, as even the Government's papers admit, high levels of dissatisfaction? Is it the ordinary employee, thousands of whom have lost their job as a result of rationalisation? Is it the small shareholder, who now owns less than 10 per cent. of the company and who, if he has £100, has dividend payments of less than he has had to pay in the last year in increased phone bills? Or is it the boardroom directors, for whom privatisation has become the nearest approach to a licence to print money since the birth of commercial television?

What does the Prime Minister tell me in his letter?

"We see no need to take further action."

There is no redress on behalf of the citizen, no action on behalf of the consumer where it counts and no price cuts as a result of these high salary awards. The charter is for name tags for civil servants, yes, for action on traffic cones, yes, and of promises for Huntingdon commuters, whose service is no worse than that of many others. Yet when it comes to a charter that holds privatised boardrooms to account, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are prepared to take no action. Under pressure, the Prime Minister condemns the boardroom rises; in practice, by his inaction, he condones them.

What should the Government have done? First, when there are legitimate complaints about the conflicting interests of regulators and about responsibilities for public and consumer interests and when there are calls for the mediation of disputes, we need legislation to create independent ombudsmen. Even in the Bill, the case for an arbiter is conceded, but he can be brought in to act only at the discretion of the regulator.

Although there is a clear demand, although in other countries ombudsmen work well, although even in Britain the building societies ombudsman, in an area where there is greater competition than in the utilities, is active and is supported by legislation, the Government are not prepared to act for utilities. We need ombudsmen who can impose penalty fines, determine whether contracts are fair, publicly make recommendations about customer service, and insist on customer rights.

That is not all. The Government's model for the legislation is OFFER—the electricity regulator. Their aim is to raise Oftel, Ofwat and Ofgas to the standard of OFFER. Although national figures have been denied us, I will tell the right hon. Gentleman what OFFER has

achieved. Northern Electric gave out only £2,500 in compensation payments in the first quarter of the year, and South Wales Electricity gave out less than £1,500. People will ask whether a scheme that gives out only those sums is adequate to deal with the problems that we face.

The power of settlement has been used on only three occasions. Repairs to the failure of a main fuse are not guaranteed from Friday to Monday. Appointments, although given in a day, are still not timed for the individual consumer. Indeed, I checked up on how the public can contact OFFER—the most basic matter of simply finding it. It is not even in the directory for Liverpool, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Manchester, Coventry and other major cities. OFFER officials may have their name tags on, but if a customer cannot find the name of the organisation in the phone book or locate the office, OFFER is not heralding a revolution in consumer service. Yet that is the standard to which the Government say that they aspire.

When we need new performance standards set; when the compensation levels depend on this, yet when nothing is specifically set down about standards or about the level of compensation in the Bill; when the regulator may recommend but the Secretary of State may at his discretion interfere; when the reality is that the regulator is free to set standards and compensation but we do not know what they will be; when he is free to require information but the penalty for not providing it is only £2,000—the equivalent of two seconds of BT's profits; and when he is to be required to publish information but can get away with reasonable excuses, surely we need tougher requirements set down in the Bill and in regulations.

We need them, first, on compensation. We need a guarantee that it is automatic in every possible case, a commitment that is based on an escalating value year by year—in other words, an incentive for increased efficiency—and a guarantee that it also includes provisions for penalty fines on the utility company when it fails to provide a proper service.

On the disclosure of information, the issue must not just be what the regulator can receive, but what the customer can receive. I am talking not just about prices, but about costs, rates of return, the numbers of inquiries, regional and local information and even league tables about standards and improvements in service. Furthermore, there should be a requirement, which I believe the public will welcome, that utility directors should come before a new Select Committee of this House as part of a freedom of information Act to give full information about the profits, performance and pricing policy of those utilities.

On consumer representation, when it is absolutely clear that changes must be made; when the National Consumer Council, as the Minister must concede, has called for these changes, as have many other organisations; when the Gas Consumers Council has expressed specific fears that its role is not included in the legislation; when the whole purpose of the legislation, as the Prime Minister said, was supposed to be to increase the power of the consumer, but there is nothing specifically saying that the Gas Consumers Council or, indeed, specific consumer councils, such as the NCC, will be consulted; when, most of all, we know that £8 is being spent, for every person who has applied for shares of BT, on advertising the sale, but for each consumer only 15p a year goes to financing the Gas Consumers Council, that is why we need strengthened consumer representation. That is why the Secretary of State should consider amendments now.

Mr. Lilley: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why none of his proposals—on close inspection, most of them do not go as far as measures that we already have in place—were introduced when the industries were nationalised: the state to which he wishes to return them?

Mr. Brown: We are dealing with the issue of regulating the industries that have been brought into the private sector by the Government. Let us consider what should be done to provide proper regulation.

The Gas Consumers Council and other similar organisations are angry about the terms of the Bill, because it contains no provision for them to be consulted. However, their existence and their role was recognised in previous legislation. If the Secretary of State said that he would agree to amendments to recognise the role of such organisations, that would be welcome to many of them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) will talk about energy efficiency and environmental standards later. Certainly the Government's record is lamentable and the proposals in the Bill are inadequate. The job of the water companies is supposed to be to ensure that we have the best and cheapest water available. Now they have become an adventure playground for dabbling in hotel and leisure complexes, television companies, employment agencies, direct mail companies and even gift shops. What guarantees do we have that the directors and managers of those companies are devoting their energy to their principal duty—the provision of the cheapest and best water available to the ordinary consumer?

The Bill depends on whether the Government are serious about acting against the vested interests of the utilities. Let us be clear about the profits involved. Last year, British Telecom made £3 billion, British Gas made £1·6 billion, the electricity companies made more than £1 billion, National Power and PowerGen made £700 million, and the water authorities made £1·3 billion. In total, last year, the utility companies made £8 billion, the equivalent of £350 for every household.

The Secretary of State is not prepared to answer the central question that I put to him earlier—does he believe that those profits were excessive? He refuses to tell us. Whatever measure one takes to calculate the profits made by British Gas or British Telecom, most people would accept that they are excessive.

When one considers what the regulators have said, and even what stockbrokers have said, one understands that in the past few years the Government have stood by and done absolutely nothing while excessive profits have been earned by the privatised utilities. The consumer wants the Government to take action on that, but the Government refuse to do so.

The profits from British Telecom are even ahead of those generated by the Baby Bell companies of the United States. They are ahead in terms of the operating margin, the operating return net profit, the operating return on new profit and the cash surplus per line. British Telecom is making excess profits on every indicator that can be produced, but the Government will do absolutely nothing about it.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I have already given way on a number of occasions.

The gas regulator has revealed that British Gas is making more profits per household than British Telecom, but the Secretary of State for Energy will do nothing about that.

What about the electricity companies? That industry sums up the whole sorry problem. On 22 October, the regulator wrote to the regional electricity companies in England and said that they were overcharging their franchise customers. He named the price charge by every regulated company, and added that he believed that it would be appropriate for them to act now. Although the director general will not publish the reply, his office has confirmed that not one of those electricity companies is proposing a price cut. That is why we need action from the Government to deal with excess profits and the need for further price cuts.

Although British Telecom profits have been excessive, local telephone call charges are still the highest in western Europe. In 1974, the connection charge for a telephone was £40, in 1979 it was £45 and now it is £139. The price has gone up almost every year under the Government, but they tolerate a system that means that that charge will rise even further in the years to come.

Gas prices among large industrial users are the second highest in Europe, after those of Germany. The price of water has risen faster than anywhere except Italy. Domestic electricity prices have risen faster than anywhere except Italy and Greece. Surely that makes the case for a price review, for action on profits and for a new price formula to be introduced immediately.

Nothing has happened, even though the regulators have admitted that profits are excessive. Nothing has happened, even though the stockbrokers have said that such profits are excessive. Nothing has happened, even though some of the regulators have produced proposals to change the regulatory system. What have the Government done? Absolutely nothing. The Secretary of State will not admit to himself what the regulators, the stockbrokers and many others have stated—that the profits are excessive. If he will not admit that, there is no likelihood that the Government will do anything about it.

The Government will, of course, tell us that they are acting to protect consumer rights. They tell us that they will enact legislation to provide such protection. However, the moment that the Bill comes into conflict with their central theme of more privatisation, the Government will back away. The Secretary of State's speech proved that. They will not act against excess profits and they will not enforce a system of price cuts even though the case has been made for them. The Government will not take action on directors' pay. The consumer deserves a far better deal than that.

When the telecommunications, gas, water and electricity industries were privatised, extravagant claims were made. In 1984, the then Minister for Trade said:

"We offer millions of BT customers a newly enshrined set of rights and benefits."

People cannot see those benefits today. In 1985, the Government said of gas privatisation:

"We have built in powerful safeguards to protect consumers against abuse of the monopoly position."

That is not so.

We were told that there was adequate provision in the Telecommunications Bill

"for the general protection of consumers' interests."

The fact that the Government have now introduced this Bill means that that claim did not turn out to be true. In 1988, the Minister responsible for water privatisation said:

"Privatisation . . . will contribute towards the reduction of prices."

However, prices have gone up and up again.

In 1990, when it came to the electricity privatisation, we were told:

"There will be no significant real terms increases in prices for domestic customers . . . except in exceptional circumstances."

It has turned out that exceptional circumstances have ruled in every year since then.

We now have the citizens charter and the Bill, the very existence of which is an admission of failure. It is an admission that everything that Ministers said when privatisation was forced through about the consumers being protected and safeguarded and about their interests being advanced by the mere fact of privatisation have not been realised.

The Bill is the first embodiment of the principles enshrined in the citizens charter. The Prime Minister has declared that that charter will transform public services and utilities. The Prime Minister believes that some of the problem lies with identifying the civil servant, and he has sought to overcome that by introducing more name tags. The real redress will not be found by blaming the civil servant for what goes wrong while ignoring the need for a strengthened commitment from Government to invest in our public services.

Increasingly, the citizens charter is offering a right to complain about a public service—a right which, in many cases, one does not have—and the right to complain about the service provided by a utility which one simply cannot afford. The real answer is to recognise that standards in public services are the central theme. They should come above all considerations, including the ideology of privatisation. Instead of providing an alibi to be called in aid during the further decline in those services, the Government should take action essential to protect the consumer interest.

The basic conclusion must be that, even when there is a consensus on the need for major changes to protect the consumer through representation and via ombudsmen; even when there is anger about salary excesses and excess profits; even when the Government say that they are taking action to safeguard the consumer through the citizens charter, privatisation comes first. The Government are not prepared to cross the line between putting privatisation first and their public responsibility to take action on those abuses.

The Prime Minister said that he wants to be remembered for the citizens charter. The citizens charter will be remembered for promoting name tags, moving traffic cones and missing the point. Despite all the expensive advertising and public relations, the Bill is half-hearted and superficial and puts the failed 1980s agenda before the real agenda, which puts consumer interests first. According to the Prime Minister, the citizens charter's role is to punish incompetent administration, ensure a high quality of service and give recourse for negligence. Nowhere has there been greater maladministration and lower quality of service than from a Government who have imposed the poll tax and failed to deal with the other abuses with which the Bill should deal.

The Prime Minister rightly says that the citizen needs the right of redress. He should give us the right of redress now—an election to get rid of the Government.

6.1 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Not for a long time have I heard a speech so lacking in substance and consisting totally of demagoguery based on malice and jealousy—characteristics that we naturally associate with the Labour Front Bench. I am worried further by the apparent failure of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to understand the legal nature of a prospectus. If clear undertakings are given in a prospectus, the arrangements cannot be changed.

The terms of the Bill are well known. They change the arrangements, and to make further changes would not be right in legal terms. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not appear to appreciate that. Nor does he appear to be capable of doing simple arithmetic. If the prices of British Telecom's services have fallen by 27 per cent. in real terms since 1984 when it was privatised, and if its prices have risen faster than the RPI in the 12 years since 1979, it follows that its prices rose substantially in real terms before it was privatised. There were always excessive price rises in nationalised industries—*[Interruption.]*

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who is having difficulty in containing himself, can say whether the nationalised industry cut its prices in real terms by 27 per cent. in seven years.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that those circumstances apply to British Coal? In the past five years, the price of coal has stayed the same while, curiously, the price of electricity has risen by 30 per cent.

Mr. Smith: The point that I was making was that prices in British Telecom and other nationalised industries rose faster than inflation, because there was no incentive for them to become more efficient. Fortunately, there was an incentive for British Coal to become more efficient, even though it remains in the public sector.

If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is so concerned about excessive profits and pay for company directors, he should have said a little more about Labour's policies to deal with them. If one tries to regulate profits and not prices, there is no incentive for the industry concerned to be more efficient. The Americans have learnt that lesson, and, as other countries privatise their industries, they now look to the British model, which controls prices and allows profits to rise if a company becomes more efficient.

If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about the excessive salaries of directors, the solution lies in the hands of institutional shareholders. There are many institutional shareholders in those privatised companies. Many are trade unions or county councils controlled by the Labour party. Why do they not take an interest in that? Rather than all the rhetoric from the Dispatch Box, a more constructive approach would be for some of the institutional shareholders to take a greater interest.

I understand that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not say that a Labour Government would intervene directly to control directors' salaries, and I was glad to hear that. However, even to allow regulators to become involved in the directors' salaries would create a dangerous precedent. I entirely agree that the salaries should be performance-related. We have learnt from the profits of British Telecom, which are deemed to be excessive, that, although strict price controls have been placed on British Telecom—it is now required to increase its prices by RPI minus 6·25 per cent., which, as my right hon. Friend said, will mean price reductions in cash terms—it has still made substantial profits. That shows the extent to which it was previously inefficient, and the scope that still exists for efficiency.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that competition in telecommunications does not work? Although Mercury charges less for a local call than British Telecom, that has not depressed the price of British Telecom's local calls, because the vast majority of consumers cannot gain access to the Mercury system. Therefore, the competition and the price mechanism are not working.

Mr. Smith: I agree that the most effective control over prices is competition. We heard very little about that from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. Much the best way to tackle the problem is to introduce increased competition into the market, which is how we shall serve consumers best. We have seen increased competition in telecommunications with the arrival of Mercury for industrial customers, but we must find ways to introduce competition throughout the market.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will probably agree that it was right to have managed competition in the telecommunications market, because if we had allowed all sorts of companies to compete, none of them would have become established. We were right to allow Mercury to become established in the market, and it is now right to open up competition to more companies. Naturally, the objective should be to have perfect competition in the telecommunications market, but that is difficult to achieve and we are probably still some way from achieving it. All the changes in technology may mean that it will happen faster than we think. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the paramount importance of competition.

There is a clear relationship between the quality of customer service and the degree of competition in a given market. The telecommunications market is an obvious example when it comes to the supply of telecommunications equipment. The market was opened up by the 1981 Act, the supply of equipment has been liberalised and the consumer has benefited. Mercury has become established in that market. There is considerable competition in electricity generation, and industrial customers are already benefiting. As for the Post Office, there is competition between Parcel Post and private operators, which works well because Parcel Post must compete in an open market.

According to my constituents, the worst examples of lack of competition are British Rail and the Post Office letter monopoly. Those are both monopoly industries, and the customer has no choice. As a result, they are grossly inefficient, with an appalling quality of service. We need to think about ways of tackling that and introducing competition into those markets.

Mr. Hain: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Post Office letter monopoly should be lifted? If so, how

[Mr. Hain]

would rural residential householders benefit? Would not the universal tariff have to go, causing rural prices to rise? Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of that?

Mr. Smith: I had the misfortune to be drafted on to the Standing Committee that considered the Telecommunications Bill in 1982-83. I say "the misfortune" because one of the Committee members was a nice man called John Golding, who spoke for 11½ hours on one amendment. His speech is now in the Guiness Book of Records. It was no coincidence that he was sponsored by the Post Office Engineering Union.

An argument in that Committee was that the telephone service's rural customers would suffer. Special arrangements therefore had to be made to protect rural customers. The same would have to be done for letter services. We need to think of ways of achieving greater competition while at the same time protecting customers' interests, to which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East drew attention.

Where there is the fullest competition, it is important to have an effective regulator. When we were considering the Bill in 1982-83, it was difficult to anticipate exactly how the independent regulation of a newly privatised monopoly would work in practice, because there had been no such creature before. We knew that British Telecom was then performing badly. One sometimes had to wait months to have a line installed, and the number of public call boxes out of order was legion—about half of them did not work at any one time. We knew that improvements to the quality of service to customers had to be made and we thought that the best way to do so would be to set up an independent regulator. Oftel was the first to be established, under its director Sir Bryan Carsberg. I believe that the office proved an effective regulator in practice.

It is obviously important to have the right system of regulation. I should be interested to hear from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East whether he thinks that we should regulate profits or whether it would make more sense to regulate prices and thus encourage improved efficiency. We want substantial profits in some of the industries, because two thirds of the profits are reinvested in new capital and fixed assets.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): More than that —100 per cent.

Mr. Smith: I am told that, after tax, 100 per cent. is reinvested. It is not widely recognised that easily the most important source of new investment in the United Kingdom is companies' retained profits, which is why high profitability is so important. It is essential to have high but not excessive profits. That is particularly important in the water industry, where there is a need for substantial new investment. Everyone knows that, if we are to achieve higher environmental standards, we must have higher investment in the water industry. One of the great advantages of privatising the water industry was that, instead of queuing up for capital at the door of the Treasury, water authorities would queue up at the door of the Stock Exchange to borrow money or issue shares.

It is impossible to secure effective regulation in the public sector. That is why it was not done before. It is easy to say now that we should have regulated the monopolies when they were in the public sector, but I do not believe that it would have been possible in practice. There would have been a fundamental conflict between the regulator's objectives and the needs of other Government Departments, particularly the Treasury. That is why I believe that there is an urgent need to privatise the remaining public sector industries, particularly British Rail and the Post Office letters service.

It is important to have a sensible balance between the regulator and shareholders. Excessive regulation would make it impossible to persuade people to invest in the company the new capital needed to improve services. However, by and large, we have achieved a sensible balance between the regulator and shareholders during the past seven years.

It is interesting to compare the performances of the different regulators. I have examined the annual reports of the different offices mentioned in the debate. Different approaches are taken by the various offices. Oftel is the most experienced regulator of the four. I am glad that the National Audit Office has decided to carry out a review of Oftel's operations and to report to the Public Accounts Committee, because I believe that it is right that, after a period, a Committee of the House should examine how the regulator is performing. I understand that that review is about to begin, and I believe that it will be followed by reviews of the other regulators.

Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of comparative competition in water regulation—the comparison of the performances of different monopoly suppliers in various parts of the country—because there is no real competition in the water industry. If comparative competition is important, as I believe it is, it is equally important not to allow too many mergers between water companies, because we must maintain substantial numbers of firms so that we can compare their performances. I am glad that the Bill will, for the first time, introduce competition between water suppliers. Even if that competition is only at the margin, it will help water customers. Those people sited close to the boundaries between water suppliers will benefit from the proposal.

The annual report of Ofgas shows that it has had a tremendous struggle with British Gas to obtain the necessary information to regulate properly. It is important that the Committee considering the Bill should consider whether Ofgas has adequate powers because, unfortunately, British Gas still has an effective monopoly of the market.

There is an urgent need for increased competition in the industrial gas market and the proposal in clause 32—to get rid of the monopoly eventually and, meanwhile, to reduce to 2,500 therms the category of customer to which the monopoly applies—is welcome and will make a significant difference in practice. My right hon. Friend said that some of those customers were not small—for example, county councils, as education authorities, are large gas users, but they found that British Gas assessed each school separately for the purposes of regulation. The proposal means that they will be able to take advantage of the introduction of competition, as will many other organisations in the public sector, as well as businesses in the private sector.

The office of electricity regulation is in its early days, but there is plenty of competition in that market. It is important to encourage competition in electricity generation, so that customers, especially industrial ones,

have the maximum choice. The electricity regulator already has substantial powers, and it is right that the Bill should bring the other regulators up to that level.

It is important to have satisfactory complaints procedures. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that he wanted ombudsmen; the Government should consider that proposal and their response to it. There should be codes of practice, so that customers know exactly how their complaint will be handled and how the system works.

It is important that, when we ring one of the monopoly suppliers, we know to whom we are talking. The person should be required to give a name so that, if the complainant calls back, he or she can ask to speak to the same person and is not given the run-around, as often happens in large organisations where a caller is passed from one office to another, which is extremely irritating.

Initially, the complaint will be dealt with internally, whatever external system we agree on. It is important that those inside the organisation who handle the complaints should be independent of the organisation about which the complaint is being made. There is no point in someone complaining to the organisation that has cut off his telephone; those to whom we complain should be independent of the suppliers.

Mr. Rowe: I wish to make a point that, although small, is of great importance to consumer satisfaction. It would be extraordinarily good if companies taught their staff to give not only their first but their second names. The constant reference to "Tracy" or "Andy" is extremely unhelpful when, some days later, one attempts to get back into the system.

Mr. Smith: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right: those receiving complaints should give their full name when customers ring up, so that they know who to ask for in future. That is especially true of people called Smith or Brown.

Where customers are not satisfied with the system for dealing with complaints, it is important that there should be a proper procedure for resolving disputes between the customer and the business. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East rightly said that Oftel still receives thousands of complaints about British Telecom. However, before British Telecom was privatised, there was no independent organisation to which one could complain, only British Telecom itself.

Before water was privatised, a constituent complained to me about the charge that Thames Water proposed to make to lay new pipes to a house that my constituent was building. The only person to whom one could complain was the chairman of Thames Water. That was an unsatisfactory arrangement within a monopoly supplier. Now we can complain to an independent office, which is a major step forward.

There should be independent investigation of these matters. For instance, we all know that the meters monitoring our telephone calls are unfortunately not in our homes. The meter is the telephone exchange, so we cannot check our bills against the meter. Many people feel that they have been overcharged, often because while they were out someone else in the family made a call without telling them. On other occasions, complaints are legitimate, which is why it is important to maximise itemised billing so that people can check the numbers that they are alleged to have called. That has started to happen in a big way. I can now show my wife how often she has called her mother over the past three months—a great step forward. We can see who has been making phone calls and what the charges have been, and that might encourage people to phone in the evening when the rates are lower.

If people are still dissatisfied with an itemised bill, they should be able to complain, and the regulator should be able to check the complaint independently. He should be able to send in consultants or whoever is necessary to look at the systems of a business; he should not have to rely on undertakings given him by BT—so systems evaluation is important.

I am disappointed that British Rail is not included in this Bill, because I wish that some of its provisions applied to BR. The citizens charter has a few things to say about BR, and I was glad about that, but earlier today I tried to discover what had happened to the charter's provisions on British Rail. According to the citizens charter, there are to be both a passengers charter and new conditions of carriage. The citizens charter states that the passengers charter will be published in the autumn, and the new conditions of carriage will be published in November.

Hon. Members will not be surprised to learn that the train is late, as I learned in a phone call today. Neither document will be published this year: they will be published early next year. That is a considerable disappointment to me, but it is entirely in line with British Rail's timekeeping.

On Friday, there was a debate in the House about the service on the Southend railway line, which, by common consent, is the most notorious in the country. Replying to my hon. Friends who raised the subject, the Minister said:

"The process of total route modernisation has already begun. The Chiltern line once suffered by far the worst service on Network SouthEast"—

the Chiltern line serves my constituents—

"although I am reluctant to say that, having heard my hon. Friend's complaints about their line. I understand that the Chiltern line was worse even than theirs.

Mrs. Gorman: Impossible."

It is not impossible; it still is worse.

"**Mr. McLoughlin:** I said that I was reluctant to say that. The Networker turbo diesel trains are now being delivered and will run to new, faster timetables in the new year."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 1407-8.]

So they will. At the moment, the service is still no better than it was when I became a Member of Parliament, and as usual I received two letters today complaining about its quality.

How shall we deal with this problem? British Rail's serious management problem is that it is still not sufficiently customer-oriented. There is an urgent need to break British Rail down into manageable units and to privatise it. There is an urgent need for independent regulators to do what this Bill provides they should do. There should be guaranteed standards and compensation for British Rail customers. There should be overall standards for British Rail. There should be information on performance against those standards, and it should be published.

British Rail should have procedures for handling complaints. In my experience, when there are complaints to British Rail, I have to organise meetings between the management of the line and the customers complaining about the service. That is the best way to get things done now, but it is not satisfactory. There should be proper procedures for handling complaints about British Rail,

[Mr. Smith]

and we need disputes resolution procedures, too. In short, the excellent provisions of this Bill should be extended as a matter of urgency to British Rail. With that proviso, I am happy to give the Bill a warm welcome.

6.24 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is always a pleasure to speak in the same debate as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). Although one may not agree with it, what he has to say is always considered and well argued. I was particularly encouraged by his response to the idea of an ombudsman—it was in sharp contrast to that of the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman conceded that it was an idea worth considering, whereas the Secretary of State mocked it from the outset. The hon. Gentleman's contribution stood better in the traditional approach of the House in the past two decades to issues relating to consumer affairs. There has been an attempt to find a consensus. That is not to say that there has been universal agreement, but there has been an attempt to discover what is best for the consumer.

I recall leading for the Opposition in the early 1970s on the Fair Trading Act 1973. We opposed various stages of the Bill, regretting the fact that it did not cover consumer safety; but, on Third Reading, I committed our party at the Dispatch Box—this was just before an election—to honouring the existence of the Office of Fair Trading and the appointment of John Methven as director general. That was how, for many years, the parties approached these matters and it is why I greatly regretted the style adopted by the Secretary of State. I am sorry that he has gone, since I do not like criticising him in his absence.

It was not so much the right hon. Gentleman's arrogance to which I objected—we are accustomed to that. What I regretted most was his ignorance. He made great play of the Opposition never, as he put it, having supported the consumer. That only shows how little parliamentary experience he has. Perhaps he has been promoted a little too rapidly and a little too high.

I remind the Secretary of State and his Ministers that the National Consumer Council, which he quoted several times, was set up by Shirley Williams and me when the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection was still in existence. We set up an independent Ministry of consumer protection: this Government closed it down. We set up a national network of consumer advice centres: the Government closed them down. We gave more funding to the citizens advice bureaux: the Government even tried to axe the NACAB grant, but had to back down.

It was particularly offensive to hear the Secretary of State talking about price increases in the gas industry before privatisation, as though he were not a member of a party and Government who decreed that gas prices had to rise arbitrarily, unilaterally and unnecessarily by 10 per cent. above general price increases for three years in succession. When compounded, that amounted to an increase of more than 30 per cent. utterly unnecessarily imposed so as to fatten up the privatisation turkey—and the Government have the cheek to tell us how much better things are now.

I consider myself highly privileged to have been the first Minister for consumer protection in a completely independent consumer protection Department. The consensus that I have described is still enshrined in legislation. Before the 1974 election, the Consumer Credit Bill was going through the House. It fell at the election. I picked it up after the election and modified it in the light of the amendments that we had tabled when we were in opposition. With the co-operation of Conservative Members, we enacted it. My greatest contribution to human happiness was either the decision to abolish the cartel on cross-channel ferries or, less delicately, the decision to abolish monopoly price fixing for condoms.

In the 1970s it was recognised that for decades there had been a growing imbalance between the consumer and the supplier or manufacturer. Changes in marketing methods, such as mass marketing on top of mass production, kept the customer further and further away from the suppliers of goods. The complexity, technology and chemical make-up of goods made it more difficult for people to understand what they were buying and to make a judgment at the time of purchase. More important, the cost of legal action to seek redress had become so prohibitive that the consumer had little chance of taking legal action against suppliers. That is significant in terms of the ombudsman proposal.

We tried to switch the balance, and there was a move on both sides to do that. There was an attempt to push the balance back in favour of the consumer, but privatisation has achieved the opposite because it has resulted in a major shift of power away from the consumer to the producer. The House is debating a complex Bill presented by a Government who for 12 years have said that legislation is not needed on consumer protection issues. They have said that there is too much legislation and that voluntary codes are required. The Government are not saying that now. We are hearing a different song.

The Government should be honest enough to recognise that their actions have prejudiced the consumer. The Bill is a confession because in it the Government say, "We have done wrong by you, consumer." The firms listed in the Bill are not minority suppliers, because everyone in the United Kingdom is a consumer of at least one and probably several of the services covered by it. Every consumer has been disadvantaged by the privatisation of those industries, and the Bill is the Government's attempt to make amends.

We all know that the privatised monopolies have become virtually unaccountable and are an embarrassment to Ministers, who try to put a bold front on enormous salary increases. They do not disagree with them instinctively, but they are politically embarrassed. The Government wish that such increases were not happening, but realise that they can do nothing about them.

Wales is not the most prosperous part of the United Kingdom and there is great bitterness there over the antics of Welsh Water. Three years ago the chairman of that company had a salary of £46,000. He increased it to £76,000 in the first year, which was a modest 65 per cent. increase, and he doubled that increased salary in the following year. His salary is now £143,000, which means that it has more than trebled in just a couple of years. The only productivity gain that he can show for it is in the courts. Welsh Water has dragged many old-age pensioners and under-privileged people through the courts of Wales because they have fallen down on the odd instalment on their water charges. While those people are being credit

blacklisted because of the actions of Welsh Water, the chairman of the company plays computerised monopoly in his Cardiff headquarters.

I am willing to wager that the Government will not present proposals before the election about the salary of top civil servants. That is because comparators are involved, and what is happening in the private sector will have repercussions in the public sector. We shall be given all manner of reasons why there should not be a top salary review, or whatever it is called since the former Prime Minister tore up the negotiating arrangements for the civil service. Conservatives will be embarrassed and will find it difficult to defend increases in civil service salaries. However, they will have to accept those increases because of what they have allowed to happen to salaries in the comparator industries.

The privatised boards have given themselves an inbuilt incentive to exploit their monopoly position. When they were privatised I was on the Opposition Front Bench and did the job so well that I am no longer there. I was there when British Telecom was privatised and I warned of the grave dangers in turning public monopolies into private monopolies. The new board is able to award itself performance bonuses based on monopoly profit and to take share options on share values which reflect that monopoly profit.

The members of those boards would be saints if they did not seek to take advantage of the position in which the Government have placed them. That is exactly what is happening. They are making hay while they can. Their snouts are in the trough. A coat of arms for the Government would consist of a silver trough with Tory snouts rampant and in the corner there would be a cardboard box, symbolising the situation in which far too many of our people find themselves.

Mr. Rowe: The right hon. Gentleman is not entirely correct,. A former Prime Minister accused Conservatives of selling off the silver.

Mr. Williams: That is correct, and the privatised noses are in among the privatised silver, getting the benefit. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman makes an amusing debating point and is not advancing it as part of a serious political argument.

Many of the ideas before the House are well worth examining. For example, the proposal for an ombudsman is sensible. The difference between the overall strategic regulatory power of the directors and that to deal with the often small complaint from the consumer is important. I am delighted that Professor Carsberg is here listening to the debate. However, he cannot be doing his job properly in his supervisory and regulatory role if, at the same time, he is bogged down in a morass of consumer complaints. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned a number of consumer problems with these industries. The Government would be well advised to look constructively and positively at the suggestion that there should be an ombudsman.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am interested in what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but I am not sure that there will be a conflict, in principle, if the regulator regulates both economic matters and complaints. I should have thought that it was a good idea so that he could see, from time to time, individual complaints about the businesses that he has the responsibility for regulating.

Mr. Williams: I shall draw a comparison with the Act that I mentioned earlier, whose survival for so long is a sign of its success—that establishing the Office of Fair Trading. The Director General of Fair Trading has an overall strategic role in making proposals for regulating the market and protecting the consumer, but he does not deal with individual cases. Information on individual cases is referred to him in so far as it might help him to frame proposals for orders and changes in the law. There is a distinction. For example, the West Glamorgan consumer protection department deals with the problems of the local small shopkeepers and the Office of Fair Trading collates information from it and from all the other consumer departments so that it can identify whether there is a general abuse that needs remedial action.

I hope that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield will serve on the Committee that will examine the Bill, although I am not trying to condemn him to that if he does not wish to be there, because I think that we might be able to find some common ground. That there is some common ground is shown by the welcome that the hon. Gentleman gave to the concept of the Public Accounts Committee looking at the regulators and to our slightly wider suggestion that there should be a Select Committee to deal with the matter. There is something new here which, with good will, both sides of the House could pick up and use.

I have two personal proposals to make—to my party, as I know that they will not be welcomed by Conservative Members. I am not saying that unpleasantly: I am just recognising that there is a philosophical divide between us. First, I hope that my hon. Friends will commit themselves to referring every one of these privatised monopolies to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission during our first period of Government. British Telecom and the water authorities should be the first to be so referred.

My second recommendation is that both parties think in terms of a return to an independent consumer protection Department. It was too narrow in its previous incarnation. Too many Whitehall battles were fought because, for example, tourism had to stay with trade, with the result that a whole series of issues that should have been in the consumer department were not.

I make that suggestion for this reason. Someone has to appoint the director and the ombudsman, if we have one. They have to report to someone at parliamentary level when they have completed their analyses. It is imperative that that voice, at the Government end, should stand equal in Cabinet with the voice speaking on behalf of the commercial and industrial interests and that that voice should be independent. Therefore, I hope that the prospect will appeal to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

6.43 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. Looking around the sparsely attended Chamber, I had a feeling that I might catch your eye sooner or later. I am glad to be able to contribute briefly to the debate on the Bill, although I can see that there will not be a meeting of the minds. In any socialist society, competition is absent and, because it is absent, services are usually non-existent.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on his excellent speech. I am sure that all my colleagues are as delighted as I am to support this excellent Bill, not least because it builds on the

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

firm foundation organised during the passage of our privatisation measures. The attitude taken to privatisation is one of the key differences between the two parties. We as Conservatives believe in privatisation, as do the Russians, the Poles, the Czechs and the Slovaks. Very shortly, the Albanians will also approve of it. However, tonight we have heard that the Labour party will never approve of it.

The Labour party's amendment shows that it is still wedded to clause 4 and to renationalisation, despite the fact that the leader of the Labour party said recently:

"We must learn to run capitalism better than the Conservatives."

If he meant that, the Labour party would not have tabled the amendment.

The more astute Labour Members recognise that, with £35 billion-worth of promises under their belts, renationalisation in the event of a Labour Government would be most unlikely. Therefore, their secret agenda is how best to strangle the utilities with as much bureaucracy and red tape as possible.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) criticised the £8 billion of profits from the various companies which would yield about £2 billion or £2·5 billion of taxation to the Exchequer. He is prepared to forgo that. If he were here, it would be interesting to know how that deficit would be reflected in Labour party policy. What would it cut as a result? To promise £35 billion-worth of extra expenditure without the benefit of privatisation revenues is absurd. To promise £35 billion-worth of extras and then to renationalise these concerns—as has been said, it might cost as much as £10 billion—is not just absurd but highly irresponsible.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister have achieved in the Bill a delicate balance between encouragement of the private utilities so that they remain profitable and strengthening consumer interests, without excessive bureaucracy. As a result, I have never been less tempted to support an Opposition motion, although I assure my hon. Friend who is the Whip on duty that I am never tempted in that direction.

The amendment is opposition for the sake of opposing, but of course the Labour party has opposed every privatising Bill. I wonder whether, if Labour Members present were Members not of this but of a similar Parliament in an eastern European country or in Russia, they would be taking this attitude. I am disappointed with the amendment principally because it says that the Bill

"fails to establish independent consumer ombudsmen".

This is bad, Surely they mean "ombudsperson".

I wonder whether Opposition Members have looked at the excellent background paper produced by the Library research division, entitled "The Regulation of Privatized Utility Companies", which was published on 1 July and is available in the Library. The paper goes to the core of the argument and the answer to it is to be found in paragraph 1(a) at page 1. I should think that Opposition Members normally get that far into a document. The passage states:

"Reference is often made to the regulators by name. Thus it is said that a particular decision was taken by Sir Bryan Carsberg rather than by Oftel. This approach is not adopted in order to personalise the issues but to reflect the legal position. The Acts of Parliament which carried out the privatisations and established the powers of the regulatory agencies lay the various duties upon the Directors of the various industries and not upon the regulatory agencies as corporate bodies. Each agency is there to assist the director and not legally to share in the decision-making process. One cannot say, for example, that 'Oftel decided something by a narrow vote' or that personnel changes in an individual agency will change the approach."

We arrive now at the crux of the matter, and it is described as follows:

"The actual decisions are made by the Directors of each agency separately."

As I have said, I have quoted from the first page of the background paper, which is available from the Library.

When the Opposition call for an independent consumer ombudsman, I suggest that that is exactly what they have under the present arrangements. I believe, however, that the regulators have much stronger powers than those for which the Opposition are calling.

The issue does not stop there, because the Opposition's amendment suggests that the Bill

"fails to strengthen consumer representation; fails to give sufficient priority to energy saving and environmental protection".

The protection of customers has been successfully achieved since privatisation and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State produced several examples. British Telecom's prices—the undertaking has been the subject of some criticism in the press—have decreased by 20 per cent. in real terms since 1984. Surely that is good. We have heard that the price of gas will be 5 per cent. less than the retail prices index next year. That may mean that there will be no increase in gas prices during the forthcoming year. That will be excellent and will be a far cry from the situation that we faced during 1974-79 under the Labour Government, when prices tended to rise by 2 per cent. every month, not every year.

Mr. Lewis: The hon. Gentleman will recall that, for the first three years of Conservative government from 1979, the price of gas increased by 10 per cent. annually. Does he agree that that significant factor should be included in the argument that he is advancing?

Mr. Knapman: Opposition Members probably look forward to occasions when they can dig out figures of the past. It should be remembered, however, that the prices charged by all the privatised concerns are controlled by the various regulators and that the price increases are less than the rate of inflation. That should be good enough for hon. Members on either side of the House.

The new regulator following the privatisation of the electricity industry has guaranteed 10 standards of performance. At long last consumers have redress—and in some instances compensation—if service is unsatisfactory. Surely that lies behind the excellent initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister which led to the citizens charter.

We should be interested in hearing rather more about the Opposition's sudden interest in consumer protection. I have no doubt that it would result in countless quangos that would be dominated by their trade union friends, who always represent the vested interests of the Labour party, which include the producer and the single parrot cry, "More money."

Consumer protection is easily achieved if two golden rules are observed. First, there must be competition. Secondly, there must be regulation where necessary. The two rules must always be applied in that order. If there is competition and then regulation, the consumer is usually

protected. We can prove that reasonably satisfactorily by having regard to the position of the electricity supply industry now compared with what it was about 10 years ago.

How was the price of electricity arrived at about 10 years ago? There was the price of coal and no one is sure how that was determined. We had rather dominant trade unions that decided that wages must be at certain levels, the cost of which was incorporated on a cost-plus basis. The monopoly Central Electricity Generating Board examined the figures and said, in effect, that they amounted to 80 per cent. of the total cost of power generation and that it had to add its own costs. It would then make an assessment of likely capital needs for building new power stations. The costs that were reached at that stage were sent off to the distribution companies, which had to add their costs. At the end of that process, the poor consumer was lumbered with the most expensive energy in Europe. That is about the truth of what happened under the Labour Government.

Against that background, it is clear that the consumer is protected by OFFER. It is for the distribution companies to purchase as cheaply as they can, through their joint ownership of the national grid, from the competing generating companies. The generating companies have a diversity of supply from several suppliers, including the coal industry. That has had the desired effect.

Miners have broken previous production records, and they are much more efficient now than 10 years ago. That must be a credit to them. I hope it will not be much longer before their industry is in a position to be privatised as a reward for their endeavours. In short, the industry is now consumer-driven, whereas 10 years ago it was producer-driven. That is because the Labour Government always pandered to vested interests.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: And Conservative Governments have never done so?

Mr. Knapman: I note that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) disagrees with me. His party has voted against every privatisation measure. Perhaps he will tell us whether he believes that Mr. Arthur Scargill, who played a vital part in determining the price of coal, had the interests of consumers at heart.

The Labour party claims also to be interested in environmental protection. We know, however, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State clashes with National Union of Mineworkers-dominated delegates in the House. It is rather pitiful that some Labour Members are mere delegates when the rest of us have the privilege of being representatives. An Opposition Front-Bench spokesman complained recently that he was under undue pressure from the National Union of Mineworkers.

Another example has been provided by what was the Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill. I had the privilege of taking the measure through the House last year in the teeth of opposition mounted by the NUM. The Bill merely sought to take in water inlet pipes together with water outlet pipes to permit a combined cycle gas turbine station to be constructed. The Labour party opposed the Bill at all stages. I wonder whether it argues that combined cycle gas turbine stations are less or more harmful to the environment than——

Dr. Kim Howells: I appreciate the point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. Does he agree that some of us are worried about combined cycle operations, not for the reasons that he has given, but because we are going to be very slow in burning a premium fuel simply because accountants have not allowed gas-fired power stations? They are much cheaper to build and one gets a return on one's money much quicker than from building a coal-fired or nuclear power station. It is not an environmental consideration; it is an accountancy one.

Mr. Knapman: I think that both considerations may apply. Most people suggest that coal is a less satisfactory fuel for the environment than others. The Opposition's amendment suggests that the Government have failed to give

"sufficient priority to energy saving and environmental protection".

Surely the CCGT stations are more suitable for protecting the environment than coal-fired stations. I am not saying that that is the end of the argument, but in the terms of the Opposition's amendment it is quite clear that what I am saying is correct.

The question of profits has greatly exercised the minds of Opposition Members. In 1990-91, British Telecom made £3·1 billion before tax; that yielded roughly £1 billion to the Exchequer. On what has the £1 billion been spent? Has it been spent on hospitals, roads or schools? Can any hon. Member tell me what will happen if the profit disappears and what will be cut from Labour's programme if the money is no longer available? What incentive will there be for efficiency if profits are reduced? That is the central issue.

Surely a 20 per cent. reduction in prices since 1984, along with increased profits and taxation liabilities, constitutes a virtuous cycle. The old nationalised telephone network was grotesquely inefficient; it was hugely overmanned, for instance. Although it has been slimmed down, British Telecom is still considerably overmanned in comparison with most similar countries on the continent. Ten years ago, in many areas it was hardly worth bothering to cross the street to use a telephone box, because it would be certain to have been vandalised. Now, 98 per cent. of telephone boxes are working at any one time.

Those using directory inquiries used to experience an exceptionally long wait: on Sundays, they would be lucky to obtain an answer at all. Now, there is a rapid response to such calls—and, usually, a charming Irish accent to accompany it. There was an even longer wait for telephones themselves. The "black, bakelite and basic" telephones described by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State were so basic that most people did not even possess one. A business subscriber would crawl right to the bottom of someone's priority list, but for the ordinary residential subscriber the chances of obtaining a telephone in a reasonable time were nil. That is another example of a consumer-driven industry replacing a producer-driven one.

I had the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee that debated the Water Bill in 1989—a Bill that was taken through its stages very competently by my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State for Employment. The Bill's prime objective was the separation of the provider of services from the regulator of standards. Labour, of course, opposed it; the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) opposed it fluently and at great length.

[Mr. Knapman]

Having opposed privatisation on every possible occasion, Labour cannot now seriously claim to be interested in the plight of consumers. It was a great step forward to separate the poachers from the gamekeepers. The Opposition merely propose the establishment of a quango to oversee some nationalised industry; that would not work here, any more than it would work in Russia. The poachers and the gamekeepers are working independently and working very well. This Bill will strengthen that process, in the light of experience since the privatisations.

My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate Affairs have achieved an excellent balance between the respective and varied interests involved. The Bill is very much in the interests of the consumer and the purchasing public, and we should give it our enthusiastic support.

7.3 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I am grateful for my second opportunity in a week to contribute to a Second Reading debate. I shall confine my remarks to clauses 1 to 10 of the Bill, which deal with telecommunications. I see this as an opportunity to amend the Telecommunications Act 1984 in the interests of consumers, and I hope that whichever Minister takes the Bill through its Committee stage will adopt some of the amendments to that Act that I have been suggesting for some time.

I intervened on the Secretary of State's speech to ask whether he was satisfied with the conduct of Oftel, and, in particular, with that of its director general, Sir Bryan Carsberg. In my dealings with him, Sir Bryan has taken effective action, subject to the limitations imposed by the House. I suspect, however, that he would have liked to do more. Judging by his correspondence, and by conversations that we have had, I believe that—had it been the wish of successive Secretaries of State—he would have wished to deal with some of the worst abuses of the telecommunications industry. Monopolistic abuse has never been more apparent in any of the other privatised utilities.

In his recent statement on the citizens charter—the precursor of the Bill—the Prime Minister said:

"In the parliamentary session ahead, I want the public to watch who it is who really supports the consumer."

In the six years since the privatisation of British Telecom, the dogmatism that presides over all privatisations has never been more acute than in that industry. It will come as no surprise to my hon. Friends that I refer especially to the advent of premium-rate services.

Premium-rate services began almost on the day of privatisation. The so-called services fell into six main categories—chatlines, recorded messages, one-to-one services, live services including sports commentaries, competitions and similar interactive games, and information services. That last service presents the most serious problem, as it used to be possible to dial a number free of charge to obtain information about sport or the weather.

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): Normal charges applied to such services.

Mr. Lewis: I accept the Minister's correction. It was possible, for the normal charge, to hear the test match score, a weather report or a road report. Now, subscribers must pay the going rate of about 35p

People have now realised that there is money to be made through the development of sleazy services—and of respectable ones. I have often spoken in the House about the abuse of the chatline service, which joins up to a dozen people in conversation; I shall say more about that later. There are recordings of filthy stories—and also of stories conning people into believing that, for 30p or 40p, they will receive something that, in fact, they will not receive. No real control over such services exists, although various attempts have been made to impose it.

The one-to-one services exploit women in our big cities in a Dickensian fashion. Women in economic straits—one-parent families, for instance—are given so-called jobs; for about £2 an hour, they are expected, during "convenient hours", to talk dirty to pornographers and other people who telephone at night to engage in crude conversations.

People can dial into a football commentary on a Saturday afternoon. Does the Minister know anyone who would use his own money to listen in to a football commentary for two hours at 30-odd pence a minute? I am also certain that many of the competitions on telephone lines contravene the law. Money and holidays are offered as prizes, but I have no clue whether anyone has been successful in those competitions or whether the prizes were delivered. Oftel cannot do a damn thing about that. It cannot control what is happening because so many people are involved in the supply of those services and there are so many services that it is impossible, under present conditions, for them to be controlled.

Such services are provided by someone who goes along to British Telecom, rents a line and agrees a price—perhaps a 50 per cent. cut for the sake of tonight's argument—and someone with no bona fides or track record and whose circumstances have not been investigated, can set up one of those services. That person might be sleazy or respectable or anything between the two.

Over the past six years I have raised in this House many problems relating to those services. Let us consider their cost. Many thousands of people are still saddled with extraordinary debts because of the costs of the services that I have described. Chatlines are particular promoters of that problem. There are examples of 13 and 14-year-olds running up telephone bills of £7,000. Bills of £3,000 to £7,000 a quarter were normal. Whenever I argued for chatlines to be controlled, Ministers took no notice.

I believe that Sir Bryan Carsberg wanted to do something about that problem. However, as always, the Government did not care two hoots because the money was pouring in. The embarrassment which that might have caused the privatisation process was swept under the carpet.

I am surprised that Conservative Members have not intervened to say, "Why let a 13-year-old have access to a telephone to run up that kind of a bill?" That is the easy way out and that is the way out taken by British Telecom and by Conservative Members on several occasions. Many youngsters were caught in a trap. The parents were unaware of those huge bills until they dropped on their doormats.

Three years ago, there were three attempted suicides —one in Scotland, one in the north-east and one in the north-west involving youngsters who had run up such enormous bills. The Government did not show much interest in that. There was certainly no interest shown by those on the Treasury Bench. However, those are the problems that have occurred as a result of privatisation and what flowed from it.

The worst kind of pornography has been and still is being peddled on such telephone services. I have no doubt that such telephone services provide a way into prostitution. British Telecom and the other network providers take a share of the money generated through those services.

We must also consider the new crimes that are being committed. A newspaper article on 25 October reported that an ingenious telephone tapper had tapped into people's telephones and had run up a £13,000 sex line bill. He also ran up a £10,000 bill at his place of work. After the matter had been through the courts and the man had been dealt with for stealing electricity, British Telecom said that the householder who had been fleeced of £13,000 would have his bill settled. However, his employer's £10,000 bill would not be settled. Surprise, surprise, that man was sacked, but he is just one of many who have keyed into that new crime.

Another example of that crime occurred not very long ago in the Wirral. A poor old chap went on holiday to visit his relatives for a few months. While he was away his flat was broken into. A chatline operator in the area, in league with the man who broke into his flat, helped to run up a bill of tens of thousands of pounds. After lengthy arguments, the case was settled, but there are many such cases affecting consumers about whom the Government say they now care enough to do something about them in the citizens charter.

The campaign against such services has lasted for the best part of six years. I have had a considerable amount of correspondence with successive Ministers. I have tabled innumerable early-day motions and obtained Adjournment debates about those services. I have used every device open to me in the House to raise the matter, but I have been unable to amend the Telecommunications Act 1984. When the Minister replies tonight, I hope that he will confirm that he will accept some of the amendments that I will table if I am drafted on to the Standing Committee, as I hope to be.

The Minister, the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's predecessor cannot claim that all this is new to them. It is well known to the point of tedium. Far be it from me to bore the House, but I believe that these issues must be pressed home.

All along, the reaction of Ministers has been, "Leave it to the regulator." However, in such circumstances, the regulator does not have enough power. The Government have rejected the idea of amending the 1984 Act and I hope that that will be corrected tonight. The thing that makes me laugh is that the House authorities have recognised that there is a problem. During the summer recess, 0898 numbers were barred from House of Commons telephones —*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) may say, "Shame"——

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): No, I did not.

Mr. Lewis: I am sorry, she did not say that and I hope that she has not been using those numbers. I must stress that I am not guilty of the accusation that I have carried out my research on 0898 numbers by using House of Commons telephones.

If we leave it to the regulators, what powers do they have? The problems have become worse. In the early days, some four years ago, Sir Bryan Carsberg issued an instruction to British Telecom on some aspects of the premium-rate services, but BT rejected the solution. All that Sir Bryan could do then was to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission reported that it was a whitewash. That was doubly unfortunate, because, within a week of the inquiry closing, one or two of the worst cases of abuse came to light. One of them involved a suicide attempt. Had that occurred before the inquiry closed, there might have been a different outcome. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's suggestions did not match what was needed to control premium-rate services.

However, in 1986, the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Telephone Information Services was set up —a puny organisation. Its creation was doubtful in the first place because, in a sense, it was created by British Telecom—granted, it was at the behest of Oftel, but its funding was through British Telecom. If that is not a gamekeeper-poacher syndrome, I do not know what is. Funding is now also provided by Mercury and by one of the aircall networkers. None the less, that organisation, which was set up to monitor and regulate, is being funded by the people who are making the most money out of it. That cannot be right.

When I have argued for a statutory committee I have been told, "Oftel has sufficient powers. ICSTIS is doing a wonderful job." ICSTIS is not doing a wonderful job, partly because it is under-resourced for the job that it is expected to do. It has approximately £1 million in funding. We are talking about a multi-million pound market for premium-rate services, thousands of lives, hundreds of operators, and large amounts of money ranged against that so-called supervisory committee. That is not good enough if we are serious about consumer interests.

Since 1986, ICSTIS has produced four draft codes of practice. Each code of practice has been more expensively produced than the last, and each one has been like King Canute trying to turn back the tide of abuses in premium-rate services. That organisation cannot succeed in the circumstances that I have described. It has talked about the control of advertisements. Even Ministers cannot have escaped seeing in the newspapers busty young ladies advertising lusty services on the telephone.

It was suggested that the price of such calls had to be clearly printed upon advertisements. Some prices can hardly be seen with the naked eye. That organisation cannot have the time, staff or energy to make sure that its own codes are adhered to. It also called for caution in respect of under-18s who are likely to phone chatlines and so on. How in heaven's name can one seriously expect a monitor to judge whether a person on the telphone might be 16, 15 or 14? Publicans have enough difficulty when they confront people. How in heaven's name can someone be expected to make such a judgment on the telephone?

The other significant move was the introduction of a compensation scheme. The service providers—those who get the rake-off—must now pay a deposit which goes into

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a pot that is supervised by an independent arbitrator. It is a tortuous process, to say the least. Significantly, if such a service must be regulated in that way before it is even delivered to the consumer, there must be something wrong with it. It is addressed to the wrong people, it is delivered in the wrong way, and much of what is being delivered is unworthy of the House.

What has been BT's reaction? BT originally told me that it was technically impossible to call-bar an exchange. In May last year, after a long argument, it decided that it could call-bar an exchange, provided that it was a digital exchange. At that time, only 50 per cent. of customers were on a digital exchange. I regarded call-barring as a step forward and gave it a cautious welcome in the House. At that time, we were told that BT, in the next round of bills, would insert a "billstuffer"—a leaflet giving information about how one could obtain call-barring at the exchange. That circular has still not gone out. Is it because BT wants to be as dilatory as it can because it is still raking in the money? Also, why has it not instructed most of its regional managers in how to operate the service?

People still say to me, "I have been in touch with BT. I have a dispute with my bill. How can I pay £3,000?" My first question is, "Have you been told about call barring? That is the first step, and then we will go through the rest of the process to try to right the wrong." Invariably, they have not been told about call-barring. I do not expect the regulator to be able to work with that kind of minutiae.

The latest innovation is the separation of numbers. Again, I give that a qualified welcome—only a qualified welcome. The separation of numbers means that entertainment numbers will be separated from serious information numbers. That innovation was requested six years ago. I think that it was an initiative of Sir Bryan Carsberg. It has now been taken on board. What worries me is that, if a service needs to be split into two separate types of numbers, what clientele and what services are being separated? The answer must be that we are separating dirt from serious information. I question whether dirt has any place on the national telephone network. It is tantamount to making sleaze respectable.

The chairman of ICSTIS says that we must not moralise about the services that people buy on the telephone. We must do so. We must take a stand on the matter. Anybody can pick up a newspaper and see reams of advertisements for sleazy services. Anyone can misdial. Sons or daughters—we should be especially worried about daughters—can misdial and hear some of the most appalling, vile rubbish that one could imagine. There is no room for that on our national telephone network.

I have no doubt that the Minister will flash back at me later and say, "What about section 43, which bans the commission of illegal acts, bad language and so on?" By splitting up the numbers the Minister is saying, "To blazes with section 43. It does not matter." I accept that he cannot do that but it would be tantamount to doing so. The House must say that we shall not have sleaze services on the telephone. If I am accused of moralising, I admit it.

So far, I have tested the Prime Minister's new-found commitment to defending the citizen against tyranny. One such tyranny is premium-rate services. Another problem is phantom calls. One Conservative Member spoke about his delight at being able to obtain itemised calls. Of course, that is a major step forward. We look forward to that facility being available to all telephone subscribers. But itemised bills have shown up a large number of phantom calls.

Consumers are setting up organisations throughout the land to challenge the appearance of phantom calls on their telephone bills. Phantom calls are being made on their telephones. I have had cases of old couples who live alone and know that no one has ever had access to their phone. Once in dispute, they have received an itemised bill which showed whole strings of calls on 0898 numbers. Oftel has loads of records of such cases which the Minister could examine at his leisure.

Phantom calls are made in various ways. They may be made by employees of British Telecom. At one time British Telecom denied that that could happen but now it accepts that it does. There are also the characters who go into the woods with bits of wire and tap into other people's telephones.

Phantom calls cause social problems. Let us imagine a middle-aged couple who challenge their bill and find that many of the calls were made on 0898 numbers. Perhaps the wife will ring the numbers to see what they are. She may find the most appalling pornographic services on that number. The first thing that she thinks is, "Is my husband going round the bend? Is something going wrong with my marriage?" By and large, unregulated premium-rate services have caused all sorts of social problems which we cannot continue to ignore.

I have already mentioned unauthorised use of telephones but it is worth labouring the point. We have talked about unauthorised use in the home and the people who tap into phones and about British Telecom employees tapping into other people's lines. But another worry is what happens in the workplace. I invite Conservative Members to think about that. They claim to be the friend of the small business man. I have given innumerable examples to successive Ministers of business men who have been ripped off by unsupervised employees or, more often, those who work for security firms which have been engaged by the company. Business men find that employees of the security firm spend three quarters of their time on the telephone on 0898 numbers.

Employees may run up enormous bills for those small businesses. Small businesses in my constituency cannot stand such costs. Of course, it is against the law and if people are found out they will be sacked, but British Telecom is not prepared to write off those debts. I can understand that because they must run into many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pounds. I spoke earlier about football commentaries. Who would spend 30-odd pence a minute on such a service? It works out at about £20 an hour plus VAT. Only someone who is using someone else's telephone would do so.

One can imagine a security man on the two to 10 shift on a Saturday afternoon. His favourite team is playing and he cannot go to watch it. He has a phone there and he will spend someone else's £20-odd to listen to the match. I cannot believe that that is right, that we cannot regulate it or that we should ignore it.

It is simple to do something about the problem, if there is the will to do so. I do not know the figures because they are a secret. I do not know whether Oftel has the figures. British Telecom will always hide behind commercial confidentiality. Now that we do not have a Postmaster General whom we can bring to the Dispatch Box at

Question Time we cannot find out what is going on in the industry. We do not know what is going on in the privatised industries, especially British Telecom.

I want to know whether the Prime Minister, through his Minister, will back the citizen against the obscene profits made from premium-rate services and against the abuses of which I have spoken. Many people are making money out of premium-rate services. They include advertisers in newspapers. I have here one of this morning's newspapers which has a whole page of advertisements for such services.

British Telecom, the system provider, also makes money from premium-rate services. So do television companies which advertise the services at night. Inordinate amounts of money are made. I argue that we should put the citizen and the consumer first, before those who make the profits. I have argued that strenuously for a long time. I hope that we shall have the opportunity to put the consumer first.

How can we sort out the problem of premium-rate services? I make two suggestions and I defy anyone to say that they cannot operate well. The first is a system of contracting in. I want the Minister to listen carefully to what I am about to say. I am a Labour Member of Parliament and I suggest that we should give the consumer choice. I want the consumer to be able to choose whether the telephone in his or her house is geared to receive 0898 numbers, or whatever number is agreed when the regulations come in. I am arguing for choice.

The authorities in the House have made a choice on our behalf not to allow the telephones to receive 0898 numbers. I want that facility to be replicated outside. As a free citizen and a subscriber to the telephone service—I spend a considerable amount of money on my telephone—I want to be able to say to British Telecom, "Thank you, Sir Ian Vallance,"—or is it Mr. Vallance? I do not know whether we have knighted him yet—"I do not want to receive 0898 services on my telephone." I want to sign a piece of paper just as I have to do if I want to move a line. I recently had a new extension put in my home. British Telecom did not put that extension in before I signed a piece of paper. I want the same thing to happen with premium-rate services. I am talking about choice.

I should also like direct billing to be introduced. British Telecom will thank me for that. If a service provider sells a service, whether bawdy, serious or whatever, the provider should be responsible for its own billing, collection and debt collection.

The Minister frowns—I ought to go slowly. At present the system provider takes a cut in the sum total covered by the bill. British Telecom pays the system provider by cheque monthly, according to the amount on the meter, which means that it has paid out before it has submitted its quarterly bill to the consumer. If the consumer receives a bill for £3,000 and is on income support there is no chance that it will be paid. British Telecom pays the characters who operate such services before it has collected the money and has to go debt collecting if it does not get the money.

If the services that such people are providing are wholesome and if the consumer wants them, the system providers should be responsible for collecting their own cash, like any other commercial enterprise. Therefore direct billing is the second prerequisite. I am certain that newspapers such as the one that I have here would be carrying fewer adverts which cause enormous offence to ordinary people—adverts such as "Horny", "Talkback", "Dial a mistress", "Mistresses in all areas, home phone numbers given"—that is supposed to be against the rules—"Hard adult line", and "Straight dirty sex talk." Those services are available on the British Telecom telephone network. It is an absolute disgrace in a civilised society.

I have a full page of similiar advertisements here. I might have read some of them out if one of our male colleagues had been in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I shall spare your embarrassment out of respect for you.

Such advertisements cause enormous offence to ordinary people. Tabloid newspapers do not carry as many as this rag, which I shall not give advertising space by naming tonight. Respectable people are outraged that such things are still taking place. The House has been listening to similar arguments for six long years.

I have made two serious propositions, which will cure many of the problems. My final suggestion is that the Bill be forgotten and replaced by a statutory supervisory committee. For the sake of getting the message into Ministers' skulls I repeat my first two propositions: a contracting in system to give the consumer real choice; and a direct billing system to regulate the problem in a commercial way.

The Government cannot be proud of the situation, they should not be proud of it and they ought to join Opposition Members in Committee to do something serious about it at last.

7.43 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I must apologise as I shall not be here for the wind-up speeches. I shall refer to the speech by the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) later as it was rather more constructive than the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who opened the debate for the Opposition. His speech was singularly sterile and he spent a large part of it making fairly obvious points. They were obvious coming from the Opposition, but there was a certain amount of assent from Conservative Members about some of the salary increases for chairmen and chief executives of the newly privatised companies.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was singularly unfair when he said repeatedly that there was no ministerial response to those increases and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State heard him. I recall my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy commenting that some of those increases were beyond the pale.

However, I shall dwell not on those matters but on a general issue which is valid. As industries pass from the nationalised to the private sector, previous distortions and holding down salaries will become apparent and a rectification of salary levels will have to take place to enable the companies to compete with the private sector in this country and with similar organisations abroad.

I regret that so many of the utilities hoiked up the salaries of the chairmen and chief executives without considering those of senior and middle management, or of the professional, scientific and technical grades which they need to attract to do their jobs competently. In both my constituency and the House I have been critical of the way in which the utilities have handled that matter.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was scathing about what he described as the excessive profits of the

[Mr. David Nicholson]

utilities. The Labour party cannot have it both ways—it has criticised the Government in the past 10 years for the low level of investment in the water industry, while ignoring the fact that the last Labour Government slashed investment in that industry.

Where will investment come from if not from profit? Are not the bulk of those profits being ploughed back into investments in the industries to enable, them, as in the case of British Telecom, to compete in a competitive and technically advanced world? It is vital to carry out the vast work in the water industry that the last Labour Government and this Government in their early years neglected. The fact that there will be £28 billion of investment in the water industry in the next 10 years, the bulk of it from profits, is an achievement. That is one of the most important arguments in support of privatisation.

I welcome the Bill and the debate on Second Reading which will enable me to mention various aspects of some utilities. The debate also enables us to review the progress of privatisation and the success thereof. To start with, we must judge by constituents' letters and queries. In the past year and in this Parliament I have received a number of complaints about British Telecom—not a large number, but perhaps a score every nine months.

I must inform the hon. Member for Worsley that a number of those complaints refer to the chatline scandal that he mentioned. I shall not develop that argument as he has stated his case, but I pay tribute to his pioneering work on the subject. Of course, such calls can be traced. When a wife finds that a massive bill has built up as a result of calls to such numbers—as happened in a case in my constituency—every other member of the family goes to considerable lengths, such as visiting a priest, to deny that they made the calls. What does that do to relationships within the family? The hon. Member for Worsley made his point and I endorse it.

As for British Gas, I must confess that, with one exception, I have received no complaints. That may be because I live in a semi-rural constituency. Although most of Taunton and Wellington are on the gas main, the rural areas are not. I shall mention the availability of electricity to some of my more rural constituents in a moment. It is a great tribute to British Gas that I encountered no complaints.

I hope that the Bill will help in this further regard. At a recent meeting with my branch of the National Farmers Union, some fruit growers told me how gas prices affect them. The case is always made that competition, particularly from Holland, is more heavily subsidised. There is an article in *Under Glass* about it. In the 1970s many growers were happily converting to gas on interrupted supply contracts. When British Gas was privatised, that arrangement came to an end, so the debate on energy costs has been reopened.

A case is given of a grower, not in my constituency, who has 2·25 acres of tomatoes. He burns about 120,000 therms a year. Until 18 months ago he praised the use of gas. In 1988-89 he was paying about 27p a therm. During the season the price for him has been raised to 32·3p a therm and he is told that for the following season his price will go up to 35·84 a therm. He says that those price levels make it very difficult to make a living and he fears that the size of his undertaking makes him a prey. His neighbours, whose undertakings are twice the size of his, still pay 27p a therm—5p less than he does. He reckons that that makes a difference of £12,000 to his income.

British Gas softened its position slightly when it announced a tiering of prices, depending on quantity used, but that applies only to growers using up to 25,000 therms. As I have said, the Dutch price is below that. In May, any Dutch user of 10,000 therms upwards was paying 21·5 a therm. The matter was drawn to my attention by Mr. Newton-Scanlon of Nailsborne nurseries in my constituency. Most hon. Members with semi-rural constituencies will know of people who face similar competition from the Dutch and similar problems with British Gas. It is pointed out that Ofgas has behaved well and pursued the matter vigorously. I hope that we may be able to pursue the matter in Committee.

I had little controversy from my constituents about the privatisation of electricity. A small but significant number who knew quite a lot about the industry wrote to me two years ago about the chosen method. I must pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy for the way in which he has overcome what might have become considerable difficulties in the privatisation process. I think that we have a satisfactory arrangement now.

In a rural constituency, people expect to be off the gas main—they do not expect to have gas. However, these days they expect to have access to electricity. I am sorry to say that there are still small groups, perhaps only a dozen, such as those in a particular valley near Winsford on the edge of Exmoor, who are not yet connected to the grid. They have pursued the matter and tried as a group to explore what the cost would be to be linked to the grid. These are small-scale farmers who face the sort of difficulties that many farmers face at present. They have been told that it would cost about £10,000 per family, which is beyond their means. Therefore, they must generate their electricity and their own generator is costly and not always reliable. Again, I hope that we may explore that in Committee.

About two years ago, when the matter was first raised with me, I tabled a written question asking what estimates the Minister or the electricity industry had of the number of people in England who were not connected to the grid. I obtained the reply that that information was not available. It is in the public interest that that information should be available. We should know how many of our fellow citizens—it is only a tiny minority—are unfortunate enough not to be connected to the electricity grid in England and, I imagine, in Scotland and Wales.

I have been slightly critical of the electricity industry, but I pay tribute to the way in which, in the past few days, South Western Electricity has responded to my representations by some constituents assisted by me. It was proposing to shut down the supply one Saturday to do urgent maintenance work at the Wellington sewage plant. That would have meant considerable difficulty for one or two firms and shops.

This morning, I received a letter dated 14 November saying that the SWE engineer had advised my constituents that it was not feasible to change the shut-down date, but had offered technical assistance so that a small generator could be used as an alternative supply for the duration of the shut-down. That was accepted; my constituents arranged to hire a generator and, as far as everyone is aware, those businesses could function throughout the

shut-down period last Saturday. I welcome that. It shows a utility responding to reasonable representations—in this case, from small industrial customers. I hope that it is a harbinger of the way in which matters will progress.

British Telecom was the first major utility to be privatised. We have heard legitimate criticisms from the hon. Member for Worsley and a fair amount of flak from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, so it is important to place it on record that BT's prices have fallen by more than 20 per cent. in real terms since 1984 and will fall by a third by the end of the present price cap in July 1993.

The price formula governing BT prices has been strengthened three times since privatisation. It now stands at RPI minus 6.25 per cent. That means that the cost of a range of calls will fall in cash terms next year. As a result, a three-minute cheap-rate call now costs less in absolute terms than it did in 1981. There is a reduction of 50 per cent. in real terms. BT's new low user scheme means that 2 million people will pay half the normal rental and get 30 free call units per quarter.

In my first year as the Member for Taunton, I had several complaints, particularly from villages and small towns in rural areas, about telephone boxes. Many hon. Members will have had similar complaints about the inadequacy of call boxes. Tremendous tribute should be paid to BT—I am not saying that this removes my criticisms of the salary increases of the chairman or chief executive—that since 1984 the number of call boxes has increased from 77,000 to 98,000 and that 96 per cent. of those boxes work at any one time. That is an increase from only 75 per cent. in 1987. It is a considerable achievement, and we should see similar performance achievements in the other utilities.

I welcome the fact that the Bill will provide Oftel with powers to set guaranteed standards of service for residential and small business customers and that, if a designated operator fails to meet guaranteed standards, he can be required to pay compensation to the customer. I also welcome the fact that, if a customer and a designated operator disagree on whether standards have been met or compensation is due, either may ask the director to settle the dispute. The director's decision will be final. I welcome the measures taken, and I hope that we can explore them in detail in Committee.

I referred earlier to problems with the gas industry, but, as a general rule, British Gas has performed extraordinarily well since privatisation. Gas prices for domestic users have fallen by 14 per cent. in real terms, and those prices are among the lowest in Europe. The prices charged to some European businesses may be lower, but, on average, European households using gas for central heating pay 40 per cent. more than British ones.

An important fact was revealed last week when a number of my hon. Friends and I met the south-west and west midlands branches of the Gas Consumers Council. We were told that disconnections for debt are at their lowest level since records began. I welcome that.

I also welcome the proposals in the Bill which mean that a further 7 per cent. of the supply market will be taken out of the monopoly. That will enable new customers to benefit from competition as they will be allowed to buy gas from anyone on better terms and at a lower price. Such customers may include the market gardeners whom I discussed earlier as well as small and medium-sized manufacturers who use gas to operate their furnaces and larger retailers who use gas for heating.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said that certain provisions in the Bill will mean that schools which use gas for heating can group together and thus achieve economies of scale in the cost of their gas. I hope that those measures will be successful.

Certain basic superstitions were expressed about the privatisation of part of the water industry. Responsibility for sewage remains under public control, which is correct. The privatisation was controversial because of the widely held belief that water was some sort of natural, God-given commodity that we enjoyed without the interference of nasty industrial money-making processes. Anyone who knows anything about how water, of varying quality, reaches our taps, must realise that that process relies on major investment and infrastructure.

Such investment is also important to attain the environmental requirements that we all desire for our rivers, beaches and the disposal of sewage. People have come to recognise the necessity for the privatisation and the way in which it was undertaken. They also welcome the great investment that is now being made in the water industry.

There are complaints about water charges, and I receive my fair share of them. Earlier, an hon. Member referred to the way in which water charges are assessed. That issue is probably not relevant to the Bill, but we may be able to squeeze in a debate about it in Committee. For the majority of people, water charges are assessed on rateable values and that produces a number of inequalities. I hope that the water companies will make rapid progress in the introduction of meters and charges that are more closely related to the amount of water used. Such progress is important given that, in many cases, rateable values are 15 years old.

A number of building companies in my constituency have long complained to me about the infrastructure charges on new houses. I shall not develop that argument now, but I understand that the director general of Ofwat has expressed reservations about whether infrastructure charges are the most suitable way in which to recover the costs of extending water and sewerage systems. As part of his public consultation on his paper "Paying for Water", the director general has said that further thought needs to be given to those charges.

In a letter to me on 30 September, the secretary of Ofwat wrote that the director general

"will be examining the position of infrastructure charges within the overall charges for each company in considering responses to his consultation paper on 'Paying for Water'."

I welcome that, because we need to pay attention to the way in which infrastructure charges for new housing operate. We must consider whether they are fair to the businesses involved and whether they serve the interests of reviving the building industry, which is in considerable difficulty.

I share the regret expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield that British Rail does not come within the purview of the Bill. I use the InterCity link between Taunton and Paddington, and I do not encounter the ghastly problems faced by my hon. Friends who represent Essex and other southern regions. However, we are all irritated when there is a delay or rolling stock breaks down for no apparent reason. It is also irritating, although it may seem a trivial point, when a train running

[Mr. David Nicholson]

on a Sunday—I accept that it may happen at any time—which is scheduled to have a buffet car does not have one.

I welcome the proposal to encourage British Rail to pay compensation to travellers when particularly bad service has been provided. That will mean that the consumer feels that he has got something back for the dreadful service he encountered and it is the means by which to tot up the number of occasions on which a particular service has had to offer such compensation. One would then get an idea which services are badly managed.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech, I said that I did not wholly endorse the privatisation pressures on British Rail. That argument must be examined carefully, although I accept that there is scope for improvement in the management of British Rail. A sensible process of privatisation may enhance that management. Although British Rail does not fall within the purview of the Bill—who knows?—we may have the occasional debate on it in Committee.

It is important to remind the House of what underlies the Opposition's response to the Bill as well as their carping about the process of privatisation. The Opposition make such criticism despite the fact that the privatisation of the telecommunications and gas industries is widely accepted as successful. There is also a growing recognition that the electricity and water privatisations undertaken in this Parliament will also be successful. I accept that time is needed to prove that.

Despite the fair and effective words of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, deep down the mentality governing the Opposition is a desire to nationalise, renationalise and control. I remind the House of remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. He is now cleansed and purged, but in December 1974 in *Labour Monthly*—I accept that he was a young man at the time—he said:

"There is no need to be apologetic about the extension of public ownership or the establishment of workers' control. They are now prerequisites of the economic survival of Britain."

We should gently remind people of those words.

Ten years later, in October 1984, he said in *Marxism Today:*

"The process of renationalisation . . . is basic to my view to democratic socialism."

He may wish us to forget those words. The record of Labour's pledges to renationalise show that the hankering is still there. The two targets for Labour's first round of renationalisation are the water companies, for which the market capitalisation is £8·2 billion, and the National Grid Company, which would cost an estimated £1·7 billion. In addition to all their other spending commitments, that is a cool £10 billion for the first round of their renationalisation proposals.

In case anyone doubts my reference to those commitments, the Labour energy spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), said:

"We have said all along that we will bring the National Grid Company back into public ownership. It will be a high priority, I assure hon. Members".—*[Official Report,* 2 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 234.]

We must remember that.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend remind me where high priority comes in the list of top priority, high priority and prime priority?

Mr. Nicholson: I hope that my hon. Friend will develop that interesting linguistic point in his own speech.

Labour Members have given so many priorities and made so many commitments to health, social security, industry and overseas aid that the poor shadow Chancellor must be desperate. "Opportunity Britain", which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said was a moderate document, said:

"The provision of water is so fundamental that it is a priority"—

not a high priority—

"for return to the public sector".

In an interview last September in *Director*, the Leader of the Opposition reaffirmed Labour's

"pledge to return the water companies to public ownership."

Labour does not stop with those utilities and companies that have been privatised in this Parliament. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has made it clear that other industries remain on the shopping list. For example, he said in *Business* of May 1990 that BAA plc—formerly the British Airports Authority—was one of the

"areas which we are going to turn into public utility companies. We are not going to leave them as private sector companies".

I am not sure how an area can be nationalised, but I leave that to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who may wish to pursue the linguistics of the matter.

When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was pressed in that article about whether Labour's plans would involve nationalisation, he half backtracked and said:

"I have already told you more than I should".

That suggests that the Labour party have a secret agenda. The only renationalisations on the record are electricity and water, but there may be a little list, as in the run-up to previous elections, when they had programmes for sections of industry all over the place. Perhaps their plans are being kept under wraps and we shall have more leaks from the more honest or indiscreet Labour spokesmen in the coming months.

I always enjoy quoting the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on local government finance. He was Labour's trade and industry spokesman some time ago. In *The Sunday Times* of 6 November 1988, when he was part of a process of reforming, modernising and purging the Labour party, he said:

"Our purpose in looking at more flexible forms of common ownership is to enable us to represent more faithfully the objectives of clause 4, to which I remain personally committed".

That is what the Labour party really wants. I thought that the hon. Member for Dagenham was the face of the new 1990s Labour party, but he is personally committed to clause 4.

We all know what the Leader of the Opposition would like to do. If he ever obtained the power, I am sure that he would not require much pressure from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to drive him that way. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield said that the Labour party may have to keep quiet about certain plans if it is to win, but that when it had won it could scrap nuclear weapons, nationalise a few industries and possibly—who knows?—start to take Britain out of the European Community. There, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stray into a debate that we shall begin on Wednesday.

I welcome the Bill and the measures of reform and guarantee that it gives to customers. I believe that it is welcomed by the utilities, the regulators and most of the press who have commented on it. Indeed, it is welcomed by most people except the Labour party. Although we may regret that, we should not be surprised.

8.15 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Bill is certainly necessary, although it is rather late and its fundamental objectives are rather weak. The Secretary of State made more extravagant claims for the Bill than its content would justify. To some extent, it increases regulation on the margin, which is welcome and necessary, and proposes some competition on the margin. However, it does not deal with the fundamental problems in a radical way. Indeed, as several hon. Members have already said, it is a confession by the Government of how they have mismanaged the entire privatisation programme.

During his opening speech, I asked the Secretary of State a question to which he did not give a full or satisfactory answer—why had not the Government sought to introduce those measures before they privatised monopolies, rather than wait until the customers had suffered the consequences of several years of high prices and not necessarily improved services?

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has already been mentioned and it has been suggested that it will have to be involved again. One of the problems is that the Government's momentum to privatise was determined for ideological reasons and on a tight time scale. As a consequence, it was not possible to privatise in a way that put customers' and consumers' interests first because the overriding interest was the Conservative Government and ensuring maximum take up. The potential shareholders' interests were far more important than those of the consumers. Indeed, it was necessary for the Government to carry the management of those companies with them so that any radical measures to expose the industries to serious restructuring or competition were not on the agenda.

It was well known that Sir Dennis Rooke made it clear to the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) that the privatisation of gas should be on his terms, and those were the terms on which gas was privatised. On the first major privatisation—that of British Telecom—the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) gave the game away when he said:

"I have decided against breaking up BT before offering it to the public. To do so would require a delay of many years in order to put British Telecom's accounts into a form that would make piecemeal disposals possible".

The idea was considered but rejected because it did not meet the Government's timetable. The right hon. Member for Hertsmere made extravagant claims at that time for the purposes of privatisation which, had they been fulfilled, would have made today's Bill unnecessary. He said:

"In the past, it seems, we have never been concerned enough to regulate our monopolies. Customers have had little redress against BT, or the Post Office before that. It has been impossible to judge whether increases in telephone charges could be justified. After all, when people point to the profits, a monopoly can turn in large profits year after year, whether it is efficient or not."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. 30-34.]

That is the crucial point about the argument about British Telecom's current profits.

Mr. Redwood: How do the duopoly policy in telecommunications and the restructuring of the electricity industry fit that picture? Did the electricity industry management welcome it?

Mr. Bruce: The point about the duopoly policy in telecommunications has already been made by the statistics. The proportion of the telecommunications industry that is outside British Telecom control does not constitute a duopoly. It is a monopoly with a little managed competition on the fringes. That managed competition may increase in time but it is stretching credibility a long way to suggest that a company that accounts for more than 96 per cent. of the market does not have a monopoly. In that respect, the Minister's intervention is not valid, but he may have a point in relation to electricity.

The right hon. Member for Hertsmere blew the whistle on his colleagues when he disarmingly said that, when he privatised electricity, he would not make the same cock-up as they had done with British Telecom and British Gas. He did not, but he made a different one. He created two competing monopolies which are causing considerable unrest within the industry.

Only this weekend, industrial users in the electricity industry have been looking to break up power generators and introduce competition, and there is a suggestion that the Director General of Electricity Supply might yet refer the electricity industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the issue of industrial prices, as happened with British Gas.

The interesting factor in all those arguments is that my hon. Friends who sat on the respective Committees or spoke on the Second Reading of Bills associated with privatisation said at the time that the Government were privatising monopoly, not introducing effective competition and regulation, and the matter would have to be examined again. We were rubbished then, but we have been vindicated, and the matter will not rest when the Bill has been passed. Anyone who believes that the Bill goes far enough or is radical enough to satisfy customers' interests is living in cloud cuckoo land. Several more pieces of legislation will have to be enacted before there is effective competition or regulation within the privatised industries.

Despite the much-vaunted claims of Conservative and Labour Members about their faith in competition, it is interesting that a truly radical step to introduce competition into the privatised utilities has yet to come. Last week, the Liberal Democrats published proposals for breaking up British Telecom into a number of components to provide effective and proper competition, and create regional corporate headquarters of benefit to our regions, which find that massive monopolies concentrate their headquarters elsewhere in the country—by definition, in one place.

If effective competition is to be introduced, whether in gas supply, telecommunications, water or electricity, there will have to be a division of the market into effective competitors. That has not taken place. At present, we are the only party prepared to grasp the nettle and to recognise that consumers' interests require both effective competition in the marketplace—the Government have a long way to go before they create that—and effective regulation where the market cannot produce a solution. The Bill

[Mr. Bruce]

provides a little extra competition and regulation on the margin, but it does not fundamentally transform the regime.

The Bill was brought forward in response to the outcry from consumers and the industry about the way that, over the years, they have been ripped off by the privatised utilities and the fact that, while the regulators have made a contribution—no one would deny that—they have not done anything like enough and do not have the necessary power or resources to advance consumer interests and issues.

I want to make it absolutely clear so that the Minister and the House are in no doubt that, despite my criticisms, the Liberal Democrats will support the Bill, as any such measure is preferable to no measure at all. The Labour amendment is strange and perhaps a little revealing. It suggests that the Labour party has no interest in trying to explore the use of competition. I agree with comments made by some Conservative Members that there is still a desire within the Labour party—as there has been in their approach to every privatisation—to maintain the huge corporate structures in the hope that they can renationalise them or, through the back door, do it on the cheap. If the Labour party cannot afford to buy back the structures, it wants to create such a stranglehold on the regulator that it can manage and run the industry without owning or controlling it. If the amendment is put to the House, we shall vote against it.

The question still remains as to why privatisation has so far failed and what could be done to try to ensure that we pick up the pieces in the interests of the customers and consumers. I find it difficult to believe that, in a company the size and scale of British Gas, no matter how ingenious and committed the regulator is—I have received considerable help and support from Mr. James McKinnon, the director of Ofgas, who has been able to use his resources—a work force of 28 will be anything like enough to shadow it. The other regulators have similar staffing levels.

I think that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) mentioned one of the regulator's disadvantages. His ability to question, challenge, direct or intervene in the marketplace is dependent on the fundamental information that he can obtain about the costs involved. It is difficult to see how the regulators can effectively achieve their goal with the resources currently available. The Government must give the regulators more resources, thus giving them more power and the ability to follow up that power effectively and in detail.

One reason why we are in the present difficulties is that the Government were driven by their short-term considerations, the need to secure revenue and to ensure successful flotations. They are still haunted by that problem. The electricity industry is looking for a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which may yet happen. In addition, the second flotation of British Telecom is imminent and creating some controversy.

I was interested to read in yesterday's edition of *The Independent on Sunday* that the flotation is being regarded with much cynicism, even by people in the City. It says that the flotation and premium will

"plainly not be of the same magnitude as in the water and electricity privatisations, but the Government has injected enough 'greed factor' into the issue to underpin it."

That illustrates the standard practice of offering a premium on the flotation that has to be underwritten by the taxpayer. In this case, the Government have provided a sum from taxpayers' resources to ensure that there will be no hiccup after the flotation.

The article in *The Independent on Sunday* mentions the "novelty of over-allocation" and states:

"This allows the Government to spend up to £400 million 'stabilising' the BT share price in the immediate aftermath of the issue. If the price shows signs of slipping by more than the market as a whole, Warburgs will step in and prop it up. Warburgs call it 'market management'. A ruder description might be 'market manipulation'. 'Isn't this what the Guiness chaps went to jail for?' asked one fund manager last week. Well, not exactly, but we all know what he means."

That is an apposite comment about how £400 million of taxpayers' money is being used to protect the Conservative party from possible embarrassment. It is quite a tidy sum to put in an election fund.

The article concludes with a demonstration that the Bill does not hold many fears for the City and does not seriously change the regime. It states:

"For most investors, privatisation has nearly always been money for old rope. Despite the present negative background noise, there's no reason yet to suppose the BT issue won't be the same."

So much for the Government's sabre rattling, and their claims that they are getting to grips with effective regulation and it will all be different. We have it on good authority that those in the City consider it a minor change on the margin and believe that there is still much money to be ripped off from the consumers so that they do not need to worry too much about the Government causing them further serious embarrassment.

While I support the Bill, I do not do so because I believe that the Government are anywhere near solving the problem. They are merely taking small, halting, cosmetic steps towards it, with a few useful changes on the margin. We welcome the fact that the Government will allow water to be supplied across boundaries and will be interested to see what effect that potential competitive pressure will have. But I do not think that anybody believes that there will be a massive development of water pipes shooting across boundaries all over England to take advantage of that clause.

The Minister seems to be nodding, but if this is so, why do not the Government pursue similar legislation in the context of gas, electricity and telecommunications? The Liberal Democrats have proposed a policy of breaking up telecommunications into regional companies, which would have the benefit of bringing down the cost of local calls, which are the highest in the industrial world due to the ineffectiveness of competition from the duopoly of which the Minister seems so proud. The fact Mercury offers cheaper local calls has little impact on the market because most people do not have access to Mercury.

It is interesting that the Government are anxious to explore electricity and water but are not prepared to grasp the nettle of the other utilities. We need to create real competition. We must fundamentally restructure these industries. If the Government were serious about the ideological claim that they make for these measures, as opposed to their evident short-term political opportunism, they would be prepared to consider breaking up the utilities, thereby opening them up to genuine competition. That would have the added advantage of stimulating the regions in the process.

I concede that the Labour amendment refers to the need for regulators to be accountable to Parliament and public. I do not think that an ombudsman is necessarily the right answer. One possible route, favoured by the Labour party, may make sense—that there should be a Select Committee charged with being the body through which directors of utilities and regulators would be accountable to this House.

We should also consider combining the regulators into one organisation instead of their remaining independent in each industry. They all have the same approach but they must have a learning curve and they could benefit from exchanging experiences. I hope that the regulators meet and discuss these matters informally already, but it would be helpful if they operated from the same office using the same staff, thereby securing economies of scale, and exchanged experiences that make them more effective regulators.

When the history of this period is written, the success of the privatisation programme will not go down as the greatest achievement of the Conservative regime. I am not a fan of that regime but I admit that there have been some achievements. Ultimately, the democratic reform of the trade unions will probably go down as the greatest achievement of the Conservative regime in the 1980s. Conservative Members have said that all types of regimes all over the world, regardless of political persuasion, are carrying out privatisation and that it might even have had to be contemplated by a Labour Government. But the Government have been found wanting in many areas of the execution of this policy; they have failed to consider the consumers' interests paramount and they have squandered taxpayers' money to secure good flotations. They have privatised monopolies which have been out of control, and then, late in the day, they have had to introduce weak and ineffective means of controlling those monopolies.

The Government have not followed the logic of their own professed ideology—of introducing effective competition. It remains our conclusion that consumers' interests can be served only if we promote competition at the core of services and effective regulation when competition cannot deliver. The Government are moving too slowly in both directions. They have a great deal to be ashamed of in respect of competition, and their rhetoric falls far short of its practical application.

8.33 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I do not think that this Bill will impinge in any noticeable way on my private interests, but it would be better to be safe than sorry, so I declare that for many years I have held a consultancy with Chevron United Kingdom. In so far as it has an interest in the provision of gas, it might have a tangential interest in this Bill.

It is unfortunate that we have so far heard little about the massive achievements of some of the great utilities. British telecommunications have advanced tremendously in the past decade, and we have every reason to feel proud of that industry. In that advance, British Telecom has played a major role. It would perhaps have sat more happily with Conservative philosophy if it had proved possible to create a more substantial competitor for British Telecom in the early years. It would have been an improvement if a series of competitors, as suggested by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), had been built up.

But the Government had to start where they were: with a sluggish and backward-looking monopoly, heavily overmanned and with many out-of-date technologies. It was quite ready to be destroyed by international competiton. Now, British Telecom is consulted by companies from all over the world for its expertise; we should be proud of that, and the Government should take some credit for it.

The same is true of British Gas, which has also achieved some remarkable advances, especially in the ways in which it looks after consumers. It takes great care, for instance, to advise those whose gas supply may be affected by works done on mains outside the house or on feeder lines, and that is a model to other services of how to keep consumers informed. British Gas, like other modern industries, manages to lay mains nowadays with a minimum of disruption and considerable speed. We should not over-indulge in the British disease of looking only at what is wrong and not giving credit to what is going well.

I do not know how many hon. Members share my perception that complaints from the public about these great utilities have fallen off in recent months, but that is certainly true, to judge from my postbag. The possible exception is water, which was given a massive amount of bad publicity, mainly by paranoid Opposition Members. In the short term, that led to a marked increase in the numbers complaining about water.

It has been entirely beneficial, however, that the public have come to understand that water is not a commodity that costs nothing provided it rains. Neither is its quality maintained without effort. The British public, who are becoming increasingly sophisticated by the day, as our mailbags show, have suddenly realised that a great deal of work goes into providing water. In my part of Kent, we do not blame the water companies: we blame God. It does not rain in Kent any more, and we face severe shortages. Still, the public debate about water has been wholly beneficial. It has done the water companies a great deal of good and will lead to substantial improvements.

Before it is too late, the Minister should take a last look to make sure that he is as convinced as his Department sometimes tells me it is that the terms of competition between companies that were already private and the newly privatised ones are as level as is maintained. The old private companies are being asked to seek a return on their assets and are receiving little assistance, whereas the newly privatised companies will find such a return much easier to make. That is not good for competition or for the companies.

The most important development in the water industry has been the major drive to eliminate wastage. The vast majority of leaks in the system are now on private property and a move to metering is certain. Although I value the separateness of the great utilities and the possibility in some cases of competition between them, there are areas in which co-operation is essential. One is the reading of meters. It would be absurd and enormously expensive to have gas, electricity and water meters read separately. It is not yet possible to read meters by remote control. That will come much sooner than any of the companies believe, but until it does there must be sensible co-operation, which I am glad to see is beginning to develop.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

One of the consequences of leaving big utilities in the public sector is that maintenance does not feature high enough on the investment priority ladder. The same applies to education. Kent is notorious for the way in which its schools are not properly maintained, and when companies get into difficulties it is always the maintenance programme that is cut. One of the encouraging features of the privatised water companies is the way in which they have invested massively, not only in the development of new sources of supply, but in upgrading what was in many cases a Victorian legacy.

I commend the proposal by David Bellamy in his charter of 10 points, some of which seem more attractive than others, that industrial companies should have to take water from rivers at a point below their outfall. That is an admirable proposal and should be taken seriously, because it would certainly sharpen up many company acts.

It has been suggested that the big utilities pay little heed to the consumer, but that is not my experience. It is noticeable, for example, that disconnections of gas and electricity are at their lowest level for 15 years. That is a remarkable achievement in view of the hard times through which many people are passing, and I hope that the companies will improve on it. As the companies have established, many disconnections are out of all proportion to the offence of not being able to pay the bill.

I welcome the news that Oftel will be able to examine the scale of deposits for the installation of new telephones. I am still not satisfied with British Telecom's policy of demanding direct debits from certain types of customer. It is bizarre for British Telecom to insist on direct debit for service personnel. If there is one group of people in the country who cannot lightly baulk at paying their bills, it is service personnel, who are accountable to the armed forces and cannot easily moonlight.

I share the view expressed by many of my hon. Friends that it is a shame that the Government cannot include British Rail in their legislative framework. My views on British Rail are not wholly unknown to hon. Members. I agree with Sir Bob Reid's good analogy that, when your ball is in a bunker, you do not ask how it got there, you fight to get it out. The time has come for me to pass on beyond the many complaints that I have had about British Rail and its workings in an attempt to dig ourselves out of the hole.

It is plain that British Rail has an impossible position to maintain. In many respects, it is expected to make a return on investments and is bound to act commercially. But it is also regarded as the only source of advice to Government on railway matters. Those two things can come into conflict.

I have had personal experience of that during the evaluation of the alternative routes to the Channel tunnel. I have good reason to believe that the analysis of those routes was skewed by British Rail with the clear intention of retaining, if it could, a commercial edge. I do not blame it for trying to do that, but it is indicative of the mess in which Governments find themselves when companies which should be in the private sector and competing are confused and have to play the role of adviser. I look forward to seeing British Rail joining the other utilities in the private sector, and I welcome the hints about how that will be achieved.

I must respond to the diatribe on salaries by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). When Labour seeks to distract from the meat of an argument, it always turns to executive salaries. I absolutely reject the proposition that private sector salaries should be limited by politicians or civil servants. However, they are of central concern to shareholders, who are often quite cavalier about that element of expenditure in their companies.

They should be performance-related, as has been clearly postulated in the document "Competing for Quality" which was launched today. That relationship to performance should operate from to the top to the bottom and there should be no exceptions. It would be a valuable exercise for institutional investors—including, for example, the trade union pension fund holders about which we have heard—to create some kind of pro forma in which, for example, the number of consumer complaints was one of the yardsticks against which to measure performance.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Might not the shareholders be extremely pleased with the chief executive who both protects the monopoly position that has been passed on to the utility and exploits it to the shareholders' advantage, to the detriment of the consumer? The hon. Gentleman's suggestion does not solve the problem.

Mr. Rowe: In those circumstances it does not. There are difficulties within the relationship between companies and the shareholders which entitle the latter to ask questions about whether salaries should be doubled. It is hard to imagine a performance that warrants a doubling of salary. A fairly narrow comparison across a small range of carefully chosen companies to arrive at a figure that is satisfactory for the individual concerned is the wrong way to go about things. The creation of expensive escape packages before someone has even joined the company requires closer analysis. I should like a larger performance-related element in the pay of senior executives of these companies, as there is in every other company.

We have heard the obvious arguments about prices. There is clearly disagreement across the Floor of the House, but my understanding is that the performance of these public utilities has improved markedly since privatisation. The fall in British Telecom's prices, which is set to be 33 per cent. in real terms by July 1993, is impressive. I hope that we can all applaud that.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Worsely (Mr. Lewis), who spoke so eloquently about the 0898 numbers, is not here. He did us a service by reminding us that lines are being used for purposes that none of us could approve of or applaud. If we can take steps to control those numbers, so much the better. It occurred to me that perhaps he should try to bring a prosecution against BT for living off immoral earnings.

The difficulty of control is enormous. Many of the things that the hon. Gentleman said were wrong. For example, it is both impractical and wrong to expect the Government or the law to regulate the use of the telephone. There are now inexpensive mechanisms on the market that allow people to keep an eye on their bills, to itemise their bills or to lock up their telephones. To expect business managers not to notice for months on end that their security guard is misusing the telephone suggests an unacceptable dereliction of management.

It is nonsense to say that we should not have made the changes we did. The position of the consumer in nationalised industries is infinitely worse than that of the consumer in the privatised utilities. One has only to look at the unfortunate passenger on British Rail, who gets no explanation of why his train is cancelled or there is no one to buy a ticket from, to realise that.

When Conservatives are seeking a distraction from the main argument, we like to talk about the Labour party and nationalisation. I do not propose to do that at great length, particularly as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) did so to considerable effect. However, it is important to remind the public that clause 4 remains in the Labour party's constitution. It genuinely believes in nationalisation, and even if Labour Members dress it up and say that they are proposing to bring these private utilities back into public hands through local authority control, that is not likely to set the steeples ringing cheerfully with public enthusiasm in Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Liverpool or Maidstone.

We all have quite enough experience of how local authorities run public organisations. The Labour party should not hide its commitment to nationalisation behind devolution to local authorities. We do not like local authority mangement of businesses either.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Three hon. Members are rising and there are 26 minutes left before the Front Bench speeches will begin. The arithmetic is obvious.

8.54 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I am aware of the time, having sat here for three hours. I realise that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall be as brief as possible. I have already thrown away four pages of notes, and I shall stick to five points and try to get through them as quickly as I can.

Many aspects of the Bill will have to be scrutinised in great detail in Committee, and I hope that I shall be allowed to be a member of that Committee. For example, one of the most important considerations for the water industry is how the domestic consumer will be charged. I hope that, during the passage of the Bill, we shall be able to table amendments to introduce a system that will allow consumers the opportunity to decide on the system that they use.

We do not need to wait for the completion of the water industry's metering trials to find out what is acceptable about meter charging. Since the advent of the poll tax in 1990, there has obviously been no rateable value on new houses, so all but a handful of water companies insisted on putting water meters into new homes and charging on a volume basis.

This has caused considerable anxiety, as I can report from experience in Sheffield. There was a tremendous outcry because people's water bills shot up not by two but by three or four times overnight. Many of the consumers on social security or low incomes were beside themselves with anxiety, especially those with large families, who naturally use more water. It is deplorable that parents have to teach their children not to wash their hands after using the toilet. This should not be allowed in modern society. It is going back to the bad old days, and it will mean a deterioration in our hygiene standards.

Fortunately, Sheffield city council was able to form a partnership agreement with Yorkshire Water. A system has been devised to help some people, although it is limited to those in council houses. The housing department makes arrangements for the payment of water charges through the rent system. The scheme started in October this year, and of the 700 council tenants invited to participate, 440 have chosen to be charged by the council and to pay for their water services, in the rent, on the basis of a notional rateable value, as an alternative to meter charging.

I have many examples, but I shall give the House only three. A consumer who would pay £7.40 a week on the metered charge would pay £4.10 through the notional rateable system. Another consumer who would pay £8.15 on the metered charge would pay £4.12 on the basis of the notional rateable system. Someone who would pay £3.30 on the metered charge would pay £3.57 under the other system. In my final example, the consumer chose to pay a little more to be in the partnership scheme, perhaps so he or she could use as much water as would be needed.

Those who have been forced on to metered systems in Sheffield and Yorkshire, for example, seem drastically to have reduced their consumption of water. The Yorkshire authority did not believe that consumption would be reduced so much in some instances, and inspectors were given instructions to make inquiries. Considerably reduced consumption poses a serious risk to personal and public health.

Under some schemes, even reduced charges will seem excessive to some consumers. Far too many families have to live on income support, and the benefit that is calculated for water charges is currently £2·08 a week. If someone's water charges exceed that amount, he or she will have to decide what essentials to forgo in order to afford, perhaps, the "luxury" of a bath once a week.

My personal view on disconnections is not necessarily shared by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I feel strongly, however, that the most important feature of a standard of service is the obligation to supply. That obligation ceases to apply if a consumer is in debt to the utility. Sadly, many consumers have low incomes, and for those people debts arising from the supply of water, electricity and gas are unavoidable.

This deplorable state of affairs leads to disconnections. The annual disconnections for water, electricity and gas are 7,560, 60,920 and 18,009 respectively. The barbarous practice of disconnection for debt is unnecessary and inhuman. I hope that there will be an opportunity for my right hon. and hon. Friends and me to stop it.

Age Concern welcomes the policy of gas and electricity suppliers that have decided not to disconnect older people during winter months. It believes

"that disconnection is largely a redundant policy . . . we would like to see the power to disconnect customers removed from all utilities."

I could not agree more with that sentiment.

Disconnection for debt has been shown to be unnecessary by NORWEB, the North Western electricity board. It has virtually stopped disconnections. Typically, gas and electricity companies disconnect several hundred consumers a quarter because they have not paid their bills. In the past two quarters, NORWEB disconnected only six consumers for debt. Instead, it provides consumers with pre-payment meters instead of disconnecting them, and thereby neatly substitutes a pay-as-you-go arrangement for the credit billing that leads to the problem of debt.

[Mr. Bill Michie]

The fact that NORWEB has chosen this procedure through commercial self-interest shows that requiring other companies to follow suit will hardly damage their profitability. A service standard requiring that suitable payment arrangements be made available to all consumers, including those with low incomes, will end the problem of disconnections. I hope that such a standard will be incorporated in the Bill.

As pre-payment metering for water is unavailable—in any case, I believe that it is unsuitable—the ending of disconnection of domestic water supply for debt has to take a different route. Water is essential for every family. Without it, life in our society would be an impossibility. I want to see the power to disconnect for debt withdrawn, and, as for other goods, action for debt in the county court established as the ultimate sanction for non-payment for water services.

Withdrawing the disconnection sanction would occasion some difficulty and cost for companies. It has to be recognised however, that water companies, as monopoly suppliers of essential services, hold an extremely valuable franchise. On that basis, they must be prepared to shoulder public service obligations. Moreover, some companies have shown that they can go a long way towards recovering debt without using the sanction of disconnection. The companies' disconnection rates are very different, which shows that companies could be flexible in their approach if they chose to take that course.

Thames water authority, for example, disconnected only seven domestic consumers for debt last year, whereas the Yorkshire authority, which operates in my constituency, disconnected 1,492. I do not believe that the difference in the figures can be explained by socio-economics.

It is my personal view that, when it comes to telephones the difference in philosophy——

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): How does my hon. Friend interpret the figures of the water authority in the area that he represents relative to those of other water authorities?

Mr. Michie: I can only assume that Yorkshire Water has not been as co-operative as we think it should be when helping consumers who are in debt. All companies should adopt the best example provided by others.

Telephones should be provided for everyone, but that is not going to happen now. I agree with Age Concern that single old-age-pensioners and single parents are the most vulnerable members of society. They should have access to telephones, and it should not be beyond the wit or the finance of British Telecom to provide services that it and the consumer can afford.

At present, there seems to be no overall national standard. Regrettably, for a sizeable proportion of consumers, paying the gas bill, or obtaining and paying for a much-needed telephone, is a real struggle. I want to be sure that services to meet those consumers' particular needs are quite as good as services for consumers in general. The poorer section of society should not be classed as a nuisance; they have every right to enjoy access to these utilities, and every need for them, and finance should not be a bar. I hope that amendments can be tabled to empower regulators to set standards with special relevance to such people.

There is much concern about accountability in consumer representation. Age Concern points out that there are different systems for different utilities. Electricity and water have regional consumer committees, which are not independent; they are subordinate to the regulatory bodies. Gas consumers have recourse to a national body, but it does not seem to be accountable to the regions. I hope that the Committee stage will produce a guarantee of accountability.

I hope that, if I am chosen to serve on the Standing Committee, what I say will be taken seriously. It is vital to all consumers that something is done: after all, the utilities are monopolies, and consumers cannot go elsewhere.

9.7 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The Bill is an exercise in retrospective pragmatism. It undoes all the disastrous consequences of the Government's dogmatic drive to privatise without real regard to consumer rights or the protection of the public interest. Their intention is clear from the British Telecom experience. Competition is limited, and it is not free; it is rigged. There is discrimination against BT and in favour of rival operators. The Government have loaded the dice of market forces in their favour.

When left to its own devices, competition does not necessarily protect the citizen. An example is BT's necessary obligation to its shareholders to maximise its rate of return. Because competition is greatest in the business sector, tariffs have been rebalanced to favour business at the expense of the residential customer. Where is the Government's commitment to consumer rights there?

Elevating competition to the status of a cure-all loses sight of the major policy and strategy questions that epitomise the Government's cavalier disregard of the real interests of the British economy and British industry. Its operation is extremely contradictory. Let us take the asymmetry rule. BT's access to markets is unfairly restricted; that is important, given its inability to offer entertainment services, for instance.

Local cable television operators, which are largely owned by American-controlled companies, can provide both voice telephony and entertainment services. That stops British Telecom upgrading the local loop with fibre optic cabling, which would revolutionise communications in this country, and that means that the residential market will lag behind. The ordinary citizen will not be able to obtain broad band or cable television on a massive scale, because only British Telecom could provide that.

Competition is also one-sided because of the way in which reciprocity operates. In America, BT cannot own more than 25 per cent. of a designated carrier using the air waves—such as the major telephone companies, or the regional Bells, as they are known. It also cannot provide cable television. However, American and other foreign companies can walk into British markets and do precisely that. We are virtually inviting foreign companies to colonise our telecommunications market if we do not have the same access to their markets. The Government have failed abysmally in that respect. All that prevents BT being

a major international player as the international telecommunications market congregates into five or six major operators.

Another problem that has existed for the past seven years and which is present in the Bill is the inability of the regulator to be made accountable to Parliament. For example, the Director General of the Office of Telecommunications is more powerful than the average junior Minister; I say that with respect to the Minister for Corporate Affairs, who is in the Chamber at the moment.

The director general is not answerable to the electorate or to Parliament. I have examined the records, and I discovered that only once in seven years has Sir Bryan Carsberg been questioned by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. On 19 July 1989, he was questioned for an hour. I do not impugn his integrity or professionalism. I am simply saying that he is not accountable to Parliament, and that issue must be addressed. A quasi-judicial power is invested in his quango. He does not have to give evidence or reasons for his decisions. That is a major constitutional shortcoming.

The alternative policy that we must address is not just to leave the question of the regulation of British Telecom to one-sided regulation or to the whims of the market. Instead, we should set a new agenda covering BT's vital strategic role in providing the best possible infrastructure for British industry and residential customers. It is very worrying that BT's capital investment has fallen alarmingly over the past few years.

We must give the British telecommunications industry a platform from which it can compete with the rest of the world, and exploit its technological lead and expertise. We must ensure that BT is a major player in the global telecommunications market and therefore protect Britain's interests.

We must also ensure that it continues to play a vital role in the microelectronics sector, because the rest of British industry depends crucially on that. We must also ensure that BT provides proper quality of service to the customer. The price-capping mechanism is inadequate to achieve that.

We must ensure that BT has good employment practices and that a key priority is given to its social responsibility—particularly to low-income customers and extended services over advice and information provision. Its protection of low-income customers, particularly old-age pensioners, is not adequate at the moment, and that point must be addressed. We must also recognise that BT's market penetration in Britain is proportionately nothing like it should be in comparison to the United States or our European competitors.

Those issues must be addressed by a new Labour agenda for regulation and protection of the consumer. None of them are addressed by the Bill. Our argument is that BT is too important a provider of a key telecommunications service simply to have the maximisation of its shareholders' dividends as its overriding priority. For Labour, the priority is to serve the consumer, not the shareholder.

9.13 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): In the years since the state-owned monopoly gas industry was privatised, it would have been churlish to argue that the regulatory body, Ofgas, has not tried hard to carry out its duties in the most effective fashion. Its director, Mr. James McKinnon, and his staff of 28 have recently been accused of worrying British Gas to death. It is difficult to see how they could do it, but they have been accused of it.

If there is one matter in which Mr. McKinnon has not done too well it is in breaking up the monopolistic powers of British Gas and providing competition to that company. The central problem is that British Gas had all the assets which its competitors needed to compete. It was allocated the North sea supply agreements, it had control of the gas grid, and it had the customers. In other words, even if British Gas was prepared to pipe a competitor's gas down its own lines to one of its former customers, that could not happen, of course, if the competitor did not have any gas in the first place.

Between them, Mr. McKinnon, the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission sensibly concluded that competition in the industrial market could not begin until the competitors had some gas, and they forced British Gas to agree, in February 1990, not to buy more than 90 per cent. of North sea gas —which I suppose is some progress at least. However, it is not enough to meet the demands which the 1990s have imposed upon the Government—to fulfil their commitment to reduce carbon dioxide output from power stations.

The accountant-led regional electricity companies decided that the best means of doing that was to install efficient combined-cycle gas power stations. As I have said, I have grave reservations about that. Bolting together those stations is not the complete answer to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. It raises serious questions about the way in which we manage our natural resources.

Competition in the generation of electricity has suffered similarly from the creation of a huge duopoly, National Power and PowerGen. They have been hardly more helpful than British Gas in letting others into their market. The Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), pledged at his party's conference this year that he would respond to that unfairness by threatening to "smash" the British Gas economy by separating out the network, by making it pay for the use of its own lines, and generally by sticking the boot into what he portrayed as a monopolistic fat cat. He resisted the temptation to mention, of course, that his own party had created the unfairness in the first place, five years ago.

The Bill will provide the House with an opportunity to examine the central contradictions inherent in some of the most important utility privatisations. I have tried to show how the privatisation of British Gas as a monolith—albeit a regulated one—has worked against the promotion of real competition in gas supply, which is a crucial factor, given the new role of gas as a fuel selected for base-load burn for electricity generation.

I am no admirer of monoliths, state-owned or otherwise; I have too much experience of the bone-headed, moribund policies and managerial style of British Coal for that. Nor am I in favour of regulators who try to second-guess decisions which properly should be made by the managers and staff of our utilities. The strictures of command economies have been seen to be wanting or to be complete failures, and in no circumstances should regulators be seen as a substitute for top-heavy bureaucracies, whether they are located in Whitehall, Moscow or anywhere else.

[Dr. Kim Howells]

There are potential roles for regulators, however, which are absolutely essential if the rhetoric of encouraging competition and caring for the environment is to mean anything. The electricity privatisation White Paper of 1988 suggested that regulation would "wither away". Well, attitudes change, and, as the Bill makes clear, it appears —to the contrary—that, as more and more players enter the market, so it becomes more and more likely that a diversity of disputes will regularly appear—disputes which Professor Littlechild of OFFER will be called upon to solve.

In addition, he will have to address the duties laid down in condition 5 of the public electricity supply licence, which imposes a duty on him and OFFER to acquire electricity at the most reasonable price for a wide portfolio of sources —fossil, non-fossil and renewable. That is intended to ensure that they build a diversified power supply in terms of source and contract length.

I am sorry that there is little in the Bill to encourage either the proliferation or the growth of the independents or a diversity of fuel supply. If condition 5 does not bear fruit, it is difficult to see how the private monopolies and duopolies and the rigged markets can be challenged with any degree of effectiveness.

I hope that the Bill will be subject to amendments in Committee which will highlight its deficiencies and ultimately provide the regulators with the wherewithal to introduce real competition and real respect for our natural resources and our environment.

9.19 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Secretary of State presented the Bill as proof that the Government were the new friend of the consumer. That claim might have carried more weight if Conservative Members had not spent so much time last year defeating the Consumer Guarantee Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones). It ill becomes the Government to make that claim today.

There is one area of agreement in the Bill: that there is a need to provide greater consumer protection. There is no doubt that the creation of private monopolies has generated a new level of anxiety about the potential to exploit consumers as never before.

Indeed, in the water industry, that fear, coupled with the moral outrage that something as fundamental as water should be made the subject of the profit motive, led to the public perception of its privatisation as one of the most outrageous acts of the Government. Public experience of the privatised water companies has done nothing to allay public fears. Unfortunately, our worst fears at the time of privatisation have been confirmed.

I shall deal with the water industry in some detail in a few moments, but first I say a few words about the Bill as a whole and about some of the points already made in the debate this evening. The Bill is, at best, a wasted opportunity. It is a collection of measures that do not add up to the scale or depth of protection that is required for customers today. The Bill does nothing about some of the most critical areas of concern, such as profits. It was significant that the Secretary of State refused to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) when he asked whether profits were excessive in the industries under consideration.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Lady say briefly what the Bill should do about profits?

Mrs. Taylor: I shall come to that, especially with regard to the water industry. The public have been staggered at the water companies' priorities. Having put up prices by so much, the water companies spend a great deal of time on diversification. They buy hotels and franchises in television companies. Indeed, one chairman said that he spends more than half his time on diversification. That shows that he does not attach the importance required to the essential problems that he should tackle as chairman of a water company.

Conservative Members were not anxious to talk about salary increases such as the increase given to the chairmen of British Telecom and Yorkshire Electricity. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) made a half-hearted attempt to deal with salary increases, but then said that they should be performance-related, which ruled out any justification for the increases that we have seen this year.

Among other things, the Secretary of State claimed that the Bill would improve competition. I shall deal with that, and especially with competition in the water industry. Ever since privatisation was proposed, Ministers have suggested that privatisation and competition went hand in hand. In the water industry, that is patent nonsense. I was glad that the Secretary of State acknowledged today that the scope for competition in the water industry was extremely limited.

It is a clear fact that consumers, have no alternative. As consumers, we cannot say that company A is cheaper than company B so we will switch to that company, or that company C has water which meets European standards so we will switch to that one. Everyone knows that that is impossible. The only choice, and people are exercising it, is to buy bottled water. One of the most staggering features of the past few years is the sales of water, which increased from 1,000 bottles a week five years ago to 1 million litres a day. Many consumers have totally lost confidence in the water companies: those sales are their verdict on privatisation.

As regards competition, no one could suggest that more than a few people would have any real choice even if the inset provisions were used, or if new suppliers came on the scene. There will never be a time when competition in the water industry will offer real choice of supply to consumers.

What has happened in the electricity industry, where there is more scope for competition, since privatisation? There was a scurry of activity immediately after privatisation. The 12 newly privatised regional companies rushed to compete to supply established sizeable users of electricity and to compete for some new projects. Now, even before the first anniversary of privatisation, only three of the electricity companies are chasing work outside their areas, and that number may diminish further.

The so-called great benefits of competition have not materialised. Like the water companies, electricity supply companies are content, for the most part, to operate as regional monopolies in the private sector. The customer is clearly extremely vulnerable with a private monopoly and requires further consumer protection.

For many consumers, prices are the first area of concern and that is not surprising. Price increases in the water industry present a sorry picture. Each year since privatisation was proposed, there have been massive increases in water charges way ahead of inflation. I remind the House that a few years ago water bills were a relatively minor item. In 1979-80, the average domestic water bill in England and Wales was £41·98. This year, the average is £154·51—a 368 per cent. increase, at a time when the retail prices index has risen by 146 per cent., and there are prospects of more to come.

The Government fixed the original K factor which led to the present price increases. Although the Secretary of State did the original price fixing, now that the industry is privatised, further levels of K will be determined by the regulator.

In the summer, the Director General of Water Services thought that he had a case for issuing interim adjustment notices to the water companies which would have limited their scope for price increases and the amount by which prices could increase this year. Because the water companies heard about the director general's considerations, they came to an agreement with him behind closed doors which resulted in some of the companies not pushing their price increases to the maximum—or not quite.

Such an arrangement may appear to be in the interests of the consumer—no one wants prices to rise more than is absolutely essential, but we should ask why that agreement was reached. It was because the water companies had windfall profits about which the director general knew. Our problem is that no one in the House has the information to decide whether the agreement reached by the regulator and the water companies was fair and just. The information on which that agreement was reached has not been published. Therefore, we do not know whether we are talking about high or marginal excess profits.

The nature of that agreement is contrary to all that the Director General of Water Services has said on previous occasions about the importance of public participation in these debates and, indeed, of openness and transparency. He said that there should be transparency in decision making. In this case, transparency was replaced by a heavy cloud.

Secrecy is no friend of the consumer. What has happened in the water industry reinforces the point made earlier that regulators cannot be the consumers' friends when they are reaching secret deals with the industries that they are regulating.

It is not just the level of prices that is causing problems. There is also the difficulty of the structure of price increases. Many of my colleagues who represent Yorkshire constituencies will share my concern that Yorkshire Water has loaded a great deal of its price increase on to the standing charge. Welsh Water has likewise tried to move towards a flat rate charge and, indeed, is implementing a flat rate water charge of more than £200 a year for all new consumers. That means that companies are hitting hardest those who can least afford to meet their bills. When we see the level of price increases, it is not surprising that the number of households getting into difficulty with paying their water bill has increased dramatically.

During the passage of the Water Bill, the Government gave way at a late stage and accepted that no one should have their water disconnected without a court order. Some companies—unfortunately, not all—have regarded that as a restraint.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is my hon. Friend aware that last week Yorkshire Water sent out nearly 1,000 threatening letters to people all over Yorkshire, including three pensioners in my constituency, because two mailbags had gone missing and their cheques had not been received by the company? Yorkshire Water should have known that they were regular paying customers. Instead of treating them as such, the company sent out threatening letters, causing great alarm. It knew on 15 November that two mailbags had gone missing, but it kept silent about it. The local media could have been used, yet the company chose not to do so, causing great alarm and distress to my constituents.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. It is significant that many people who have never been in debt in their lives are receiving threatening letters or even summonses as a result of the trigger-happy approach of some water companies which should know better.

I suggest to hon. Members who serve on the Committee discussing this Bill that they look carefully at the moves under way in the water companies to remove the need for a court order before a disconnection. I trust that members of the Committee will resist any move to allow disconnections without a court order.

There are other problems with the price structure. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) touched on the problems associated with water metering. Small business men are being forced to accept compulsory water metering with almost no discussion with the water company. Compulsory metering can lead to a doubling of their bills. I know of one publican in my constituency who is facing compulsory metering; it may send his water bill into four figures—more than doubling what he pays now—yet neighbouring pubs are being left untouched. So much for fair competition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Heeley also drew attention to the owners or tenants of new properties that do not have a rateable value. My hon. Friend and other colleagues have fought Yorkshire Water on this and because of their efforts a new scheme has been introduced in Sheffield. The city council has implemented a landlord agreement with Yorkshire Water to provide an option for charging and collecting on a national rateable value basis.

Today the Secretary of State said that the choice between metering or payment on a rateable value basis was not a matter for the regulator. It is true that the Water Act allows the water companies to determine their method of charging. Today the Secretary of State revealed that, if water companies choose to introduce compulsory water metering, the Government will sit back and do nothing about it. Owners or tenants of new properties should enjoy the same rights as the owners or tenants of existing properties. They should not be subject to compulsory water metering, which is aimed solely at increasing the revenue of the water supply companies.

Another issue of vital interest to customers which has not been addressed in the Bill is the quality of water supply and environmental considerations. They represent a vital part of consumer protection. In Britain, 11 million people receive drinking water that does not meet European Community standards—standards that were established in

[Mrs. Taylor]

an EC directive of 1980 and which should have been implemented by 1985. Now, in 1991, we still have a major problem with drinking water quality.

Public confidence is not helped by the Government's attempt to introduce domestic derogations. A letter has been sent by the European Commission about 4,536 infringements of the EC directive on drinking water. I have a practical suggestion that would help all our consumers. Everyone is entitled to know whether their drinking water supply meets the EC standard, so information on water quality should be stated on the bottom of every bill. Then all consumers would know where they stand. I hope that my hon. Friends who serve on the Committee will table amendments to that effect.

Environmental considerations affect other industries. At the time of the electricity privatisation, the Government made their priority clear when they got Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to issue a letter for inclusion in the prospectus to the effect that the electricity industry would not be forced to push ahead with flue gas desulphurisation as quickly as it should. That letter was designed to take the pressure off the industry to ensure a sucessful flotation. It meant that the industry could waive the potential costs of the clean-up. In other words, the Government put privatisation before environmental considerations and before cleaning up the industry.

In May, I wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment asking for assurances that National Power and PowerGen would not have the information relating to their pollution authorisations omitted from the public register. The Secretary of State has not replied, so we must fear the worst. It is a sad fact that not one of our power stations will have been cleaned up by the time that the Government leave office.

During the passage of the Electricity Bill, my hon. Friends tried time and again to introduce amendments to compel energy providers to give due attention to energy conservation measures and energy efficiency—to make more than token gestures. Time and again the Government voted them down, even though energy conservation measures could do so much, not only to advance environmental protection but to improve the quality of life for many of the poorest people in this country.

Last week, Dr. Brenda Boardman, probably Britain's leading expert on the subject, produced a report showing that 7·5 million householders in Britain are suffering from fuel poverty. Many of them are pensioners or people with young children. It is a sad indictment of this Government that, had the programmes of the Callaghan Government been in force for the past 12 years, an extra 5 million households would have had the benefit of home insulation.

Ministers have had ample opportunity to show their priorities. On every occasion the Government choose to put ideology before consumers, taxpayers, the environment and common sense. Today, the Secretary of State said that there will be no changes to the Bill that could affect BT's share prices. Back Benchers said that that was necessary for legal reasons due to the timing of the flotation, but who chose the timing? That shows the Government's priority.

The Government put the electricity privatisation before the environment. The Government spent £3·3 billion of taxpayers' money to give away the water industry, not for the benefit of taxpayers or consumers, but for the benefit of shareholders and, above all, top management, whose salary increases and outrageous perks add insult to injury. If the Government were serious about looking after consumers' interests, they would not be content with the measures in the Bill. It must be obvious to anyone who has listened to today's debate that only the Labour party puts the interests of consumers and the environment before the interests of shareholders and top management.

9.42 pm

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): What an extraordinary performance the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) gave. She asked us to go back to the golden age of Callaghan. All that one can say is that he was better than the current Labour party leader. I do not want to return to a world in which the lights go out, there is no money in the country, we have to turn to the International Monetary Fund, and investment in the leading industries has to be cut back. That is the state to which the Labour party would return us.

It was because the Callaghan Government ran out of money to spend on the water industry and the big utilities that they encountered such problems. The hon. Lady did not seem to realise that the diversification policy of those industries cannot be cross-financed from the core businesses—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Lady would listen, because she might learn something and avoid mistakes in future. Under the rules of the water industry, the diversifications cannot be financed from the core businesses, but are clearly segregated by the regulator.

The hon. Lady complained about what she called secret deals to cut price increases. I welcomed moves to cut price increases and did not find that they were being done in secret—I read about them in the newspapers and elsewhere. The hon. Lady was also worried about methods of debt recovery, but admitted that legislation states that a court order is needed. As a result, the number of such procedures is well down on previous years because the process is much better. I hope that she will welcome that.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister resist any attempts to change the position in the water industry and any attempts to remove the need for a court order for disconnection?

Mr. Redwood: The Government have announced no change of policy. The Government's policy, of which we are proud, remains the same.

The hon. Lady also said that she was worried about people buying more bottled water. Perhaps she does not realise that that is a characteristic of people becoming more prosperous. Perhaps she does not realise that they are buying private water which is in competition with other private water.

Hon. Members make strange predictions when we try to introduce measures to improve such industries and their performance. When the measures to privatise British Telecom were being debated in the House, Opposition Members said that the public telephone box was threatened with extinction. We have heard in this debate that, far from being extinguished by these policies, it is flourishing. Many more call boxes are working, and there are many more of them.

Hon. Members told us that rural services, emergency services, call boxes and provision for the blind and disabled would all have an uncertain future under privatisation, yet in each case the future has been better, thanks to the privatised industry and the regulatory world that we have created. The leading Opposition spokesman, on Second Reading of the BT legislation, said that privatisation would be a "devastating blow". Perhaps he had in mind profits collapsing or the inability of the industry to finance its capital programme. Tonight, however, the Opposition come to complain that the industry is too successful and making too much money, even under the tight price controls that the Government and the regulator have imposed.

I am happy that BT is profitable. I want it to have the money for the investment that it needs to build the phone service that we require for the 1990s. I am also confident that BT is not achieving that by exploiting customers because of the tight price controls which Labour could never offer, since in its day the company was nationalised and did not work nearly as well.

We have had a good if somewhat sparsely attended debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) made some extremely good points about prospectuses, competition and the regulatory task. Opposition Members should study them before going into the Committee.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a miscued attack on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He did not understand my right hon. Friend's point about how the Government have stood up for consumers by introducing competition and the right kind of legislation. He should reflect on the Secretary of State's opening remarks, which were clear and helpful to customers, as this Bill will be.

The right hon. Gentleman asked why we were introducing a Bill on this subject. The answer is that our policies are evolving. What we have achieved so far has been extremely good, so we want more of it. We recognise the need—the Government always have recognised it—for regulation, when there are elements of monopoly. We also believe that competition is superior to regulation, so whenever possible we promote competition so that the need for regulation is not as great.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) understood all these points and put them clearly to the Opposition. At the same time, he made a good contribution on the difficulty in which Labour will find itself, if it is ever in government, with its massive plans for overspending. Indeed, Opposition Members did nothing to clear up the uncertainties about the huge expenditure on which they would have to embark to renationalise these industries before messing them up again as they did in the 1970s when they were under national control.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud pointed out that a regulator is much better than an ombudsman. If the person sorting out complaints for consumers is also the person regulating the industry and setting the prices, he is in a much stronger position. That gives the regulator much more clout. How could the ombudsman improve on that?

The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) made a sincere if overlong speech on premium-rate services. I read in the guide to Members of the House that he is the embodiment of the success of Government policies. He sports a fax number, a pager, a messenger service number and several telephone numbers, as listed in that excellent publication. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is proud to join in the consumers' society that has been created by our policies.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): A yuppie socialist.

Mr. Redwood: I thought that phrase went out with the 1980s. We shall have to think of a new one, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Lewis: Would the Minister like my complaints about the service by fax, pager or mobile phone?

Mr. Redwood: I shall be happy to receive them in any form in which the hon. Gentleman cares to send them—but they should probably go to the independent regulator, as he well knows. Like him, I do not like sleazy and unpleasant chatlines or dirty recorded messages. That is why powers were taken in the legislation to stop just that sort of abuse. That is why licence powers are being used to control it and why this Bill, soon to go to Committee, will give the director general still more powers, should he want to use them. I am sure that he will hear from the hon. Member for Worsley if he does not want to use them.

I do not think it right to ban all these services. I do not want to stop people listening to football commentaries or cricket scores. These services are subject to gradation and it is difficult to distinguish between them sometimes. Of course we want to ban the disgusting material, and the powers exist to do so. I want to give people a choice, and the system that we have set up through ICSTIS and the regulator will do just that. The hon. Gentleman defeated his own argument by saying that 0898 numbers are barred in the House in order to stop hon. Members exploiting them.

Mr. Lewis: The Minister misses the whole point. Large organisations such as this can impose such a bar, but domestic customers cannot, nor should they be expected to do so. The small business man with two men and a dog working for him cannot afford the call-bar facilities that are in the House. I am trying to get the Minister to remove his blinkers and do something in favour of the small person.

Mr. Redwood: Call barring is available to all those using digital exchanges, which now cover large chunks of the country and will shortly cover the whole country. I am happy to add my voice to that of the hon. Gentleman to ensure that the facility is understood all over the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) welcomed the Bill. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield posed the best question of the debate when they asked whether it could apply to rail. I do not know whether I have the best answer to that, but I remind them that the Bill relates only to those utilities that have been privatised and to which a policy of independent regulators applies. The task would be more complex and would require other policy issues to be considered in relation to industries that are still nationalised.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) for giving one or perhaps two cheers for the Bill and for saying that his party would support it. He took a rather wrong-headed view of the history of the development of competition in these industries, although he will not be surprised to learn that I agree with his criticisms of the

[Mr. Redwood]

Labour amendment. He seemed to be unaware that there had been a further post-duopoly review and that competition within the telecommunications industry is being opened up generally. I hope that on reflection he will agree that that is good.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) justifiably praised British Gas and British Telecom for elements of their services which are now very good. He asked whether competition between the old private companies and the newly privatised ones is fair. Wearing my competition hat, I shall be happy to examine any evidence which suggests that competition is not fair. If my hon. Friend can make a case, we shall have to think about the issue. I entirely agree that salaries should be performance-related and subject to shareholder control.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) did not mention BT's low-user scheme, which is a major advance and solves some of the low-income consumer problems that the hon. Gentleman described. He did not mention the point missed by the hon. Member for Dewsbury, that disconnections are now at a low level.

The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) easily won the prize for the longest words in the debate, but that does not mean that his speech had the best content. For exampie, he thought that BT should be allowed to offer entertainment services but seemed to be unaware that it could and had applied for cable franchises. He also seemed unaware of the great progress in laying fibre optic cable around the country, mainly between cities. That has come about because of our liberalisation policy and as a result of the investment moneys that British Telecom and others have available.

I agreed with the thoughtful contribution by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) about the problem of a shortage of gas. However, I did not agree with some of the hon. Gentleman's other points, especially about his hatred of combined cycle gas. That is the technology that the new electricity industry wishes to build because it is environmentally better and cheaper. Those are two good reasons for pursuing such schemes. The hon. Gentleman seemed to be unaware of the great progress being made in building an independent and renewable sector in electricity.

In the long tirade by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), there were about 10 debating points and if time permits I shall try to answer them. I shall begin by correcting an error in the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said that there had recently been 102,000 complaints against British Gas. I am told by British Gas that that is untrue, and that the hon. Gentleman has taken the number of inquiries and complaints made to the Gas Consumers Council. That includes people ringing up to ask where they can pay their bills, which is hardly a complaint. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept the correction that, far from there being 102,000 complaints, British Gas received 23,000.

The hon. Gentleman's first request was for a widespread review of the prices, policies and performance of these industries. Where was he during the past year's review of the telecoms industry? Is he aware that the duopoly policy was re-examined on the stated date and competition was introduced generally? Is he aware that, in the case of telecoms, the price control formula started at retail prices index minus 3 and went on to RPI minus 4·5 and only recently has been increased to RPI minus 6·25? Where else in the world can one get a pledge of a 6·25 per cent. real cut in telephone prices year after year? If the hon. Gentleman goes to France—a country he seems to admire more than ours—he will find that it has introduced a price formula that is far less tough than ours on BT because it knows that its nationalised industry would find it difficult to match the performance of BT.

If the hon. Gentleman would listen rather than talk, he would learn that the price formula for gas has also been revised: where it was minus 2 on the controllable costs it is now going to minus 5—another tough target. I hope that, the hon. Gentleman will welcome these tough targets and recognise that they mean that when the time is right, these matters are reviewed and the customer gets a better deal because we make sure that he does and that the regulators do their job excellently.

I was surprised by the hon. Gentleman's attack on the standards of the work of some of the regulators. I should have thought that hon. Members would have got behind the work of the regulators, who are standing up for the interests of the customer. He asked where OFFER's telephone number was. It is on the back of the bill. *[Interruption.]* I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks in the right telephone directory.

My hon. Friends have already dealt with the Labour party's idea for ombudsmen, and I have also mentioned it in my reply to them. The regulators have stronger powers than ombudsmen could have, not only with the new powers in the Bill but with their existing powers.

The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that he believes his own propaganda. Halfway through our policy discussions in preparation for the citizens charter and the Bill, he obtained a leaked document containing the views of some officials. He claimed in the press that it set out Government policy, but it was a million miles away from our policy. He is now upset that it is not our policy and keeps saying that the views in it must be the views of Ministers. They are not—it was a working document from officials; Ministers' views were set out in the citizens charter as they are set out in the Bill. They are different from the views that he is saying are ours, and I wish that he would retract that.

The hon. Gentleman said that there was not enough consumer representation. Perhaps he should read the Bill, in which there are several references to the Gas Consumers Council. The regulators will consult widely with consumer groups and customers before setting out standards, in conjunction with the industries.

The hon. Member has been trying to make out that the Government have been putting profits, the success of BT and the shareholder interest before our policy. How can the Labour party say that in the year when we opened up the whole of industry to competition, in the year when we tightened the price control and made it clear that the customer is high on our list of priorities? His claim is absurd and he should withdraw it immediately. We have set out the policies for customers, and that was what motivated the main changes this year in our telecoms policy.

Much of the speech by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, which lacked content, was taken up by a series of jealous tirades against the pay of people in the private sector who have satisfied shareholders, directors and other representatives of their need for a pay rise. He

claimed that complaints were up but nobody ever thought of complaining when the Labour party was in power because there was not a proper procedure, and in many cases the service was so bad that people did not bother. The hon. Gentleman then said that he was thinking of municipalising water. Heaven help us! I know that the House will reject that idea.

I know that the House will vote overwhelmingly for the Bill, which I wholeheartedly recommend.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 278.

Division No. 11] **[9.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Mr Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim

Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Nicol
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

COMPETITION AND SERVICE (UTILITIES) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Competition and Service (Utilities) Bill it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to provisions of the Act in sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

MAGISTRATES' COURTS

That the draft Magistrates' Courts (Remands in Custody) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 12th July, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Youth Training Guarantee

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The non-implementation of the youth training guarantee is of great importance to individual young people and to the nation's future. There will be no decent future for our young people unless they acquire skills, and no future for Britain unless its population is educated and trained to world standards. To catch up with Germany by the end of the decade, Britain's productivity growth must exceed Germany's by 3 per cent. a year, but we cannot do that with an under-educated and under-trained work force.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech, foolhardy and complacent Ministers tried to foster the illusion that our training matched Germany's. Although, no doubt, some British training compares with that of Germany, many of our young people get absolutely no training whatsoever, and that is a scandal. Many young people enter employment offering no training, and many more do not get even that. They leave school with no job and no youth training place, either. They start their young lives by being thrown on the scrap heap at 16, 17 or 18. In Germany, all young workers get a thorough, three-year externally examined apprenticeship. Here, the Government like to claim that those without jobs are guaranteed a two-year YT place, but even that, something inferior to the German model, is not being delivered. It is a fraud.

Through the mouths of Employment Ministers, the Government' claim and pretend that there is a YT guarantee. Continually, they stand at the Dispatch Box and repeat the mantra that they are committed to the guarantee. So that is all right; it sounds good. The innocent might imagine that something will flow from that, but I smell a rat when I hear the word "commitment". What does it guarantee? Very little at all. The Government do not deliver the so-called guarantee. It has conveniently been handed over to the training and enterprise councils, but then the Government cynically deny them the resources to do the job.

The truth is that Ministers who mouth those grandiloquent guarantees know little of what is happening on the ground. They hide behind the TECs, they do not listen to constituency Members who know what is happening in their areas, and they do not listen to the TECs, either. I discovered that when I reported to the House that hundreds of young people in the London borough of Newham had no jobs or YT places. All they got was the usual complacent, superficial parroting of the empty nonsense about commitments and guarantees.

Ministers do not know how many young people are without a YT place. The TECs themselves are often vague. The people who know are in the careers service. Last Friday, I received a letter from the Newham career service. It told me the figures in east London. The figures are from 10 October, and they show Barking and Dagenham 437, Havering 539, Redbridge 537, Tower Hamlets 911, and Waltham Forest 566. The figures for Newham are dated 14 November, so I hope that we do not hear Ministers say that they are not up to date. In Newham, there are 519 young people without a job; 58 say that they are not interested, so that means that 451 are seeking a YT place.

I randomly tried a number of careers offices, and I received a fax showing the situation in Derbyshire: Alfreton 56, Derby 832, Ilkeston 184, Long Eaton 105, Matlock 37, and Swadlincote 103. In total, in Derbyshire there are 1,317. A fax from Leeds shows that there are 873 there. Another one from Birmingham shows 538 there. I have information from Leicestershire showing 1,300. In Lambeth there are 586, the Wirral 444, Newcastle 342, Gateshead 264, and West Sussex 544. I emphaasise that those figures are all random, and they show that hundreds of young people all over the country are denied a job or a YT place.

As the Secretary of State knows, the Select Committee on Employment has received letters from 69 TECs, and those letters have been placed in the Library. Those letters tell us that more than half the TECs are not meeting the youth guarantee. Five TECs have reported having more than 1,000 youngsters awaiting offers of training places, and another five have between 500 and 1,000 waiting. Many TECs explain graphically that they have inadequate money and that employers are offering too few work experience places because of the recession.

One of the major causes is the Government's cuts in expenditure on training. Department of Employment expenditure has fallen by 42 per cent. in the past five years. Expenditure fell as unemployment fell, but it has continued to decline as unemployment has rocketed again. In the past year, unemployment has risen by a massive 47 per cent., but instead of rising by a similar amount, expenditure in 1991-92 will be 10 per cent. less in real terms than in 1990-91. Next year, instead of the required substantial increase that is needed, there will be a derisory and inadequate increase of 2 per cent.

In 1993-94, the downward path will resume, with a further fall of 6·5 per cent. To measure the scale of the cuts, in 1994-95, the real value of all Departments' expenditure is planned to be 82 per cent. more than it was eight years earlier. But the Department of Employment's expenditure is planned to be 34 per cent. less than eight years earlier. Resources for employment training have been cut this year and for youth training are roughly the same, even though the need is so much greater.

I have here some of the letters which the Select Committee has received from the TECs. The one from Avon says:

"there is difficulty at present in meeting the YT guarantee in Avon. The main cause is a lack of work placements due to the present economic climate."

The letter from Bedfordshire says:

"our budget is based largely on an historically low number of unemployed people in the County."

But between July 1990 and July 1991, the percentatge of unemployed doubled. The letter continues:

"The TEC cannot address the guaranteed programmes for young and unemployed people in isolation from this economic background. In addition to insufficient budget in a time of deep recession . . . we now realise that TECs are facing an unmanageable task. We are required to operate demand led programmes with cash limited budgets."

The letter from Bolton-Bury TEC says:

"On Youth Training there are currently approximately 500 young people within the guarantee group who are awaiting placement with an employer. The Managing Agents have cited the recession as the reason for the shortfall of placements."

The letter from Calderdale says:

"Negotiations with the Department are taking place on an increase in funding but have proved difficult to achieve so far. The Department of Employment are insisting that the TEC

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

use funds earmarked for other projects to meet the Youth Training guarantee. This is causing considerable disquiet amongst TEC Board members who do not wish to see long-term plans hijacked by such short-term changes in the demand for national programmes arising from the recession. . . Many employers are reluctant to become involved either because they have a shortage of work or they cannot afford the financial contribution expected of them."

The Calderdale TEC says that it has many young people waiting.

CambsTEC in Cambridge says:

"Over recent months, CambsTEC has become increasingly concerned about Youth Training's ability to meet the increasing demands placed upon it, due to the limited employment opportunities presently available to young people."

It says that unemployment has doubled in its area this year. As of 12 September 1991, 200 young people in the CambsTEC area were waiting for a youth training place.

The chief executive of the central London TEC says:

"I know that we are not alone in our concern about our ability to meet ET and YT guarantees, given current levels of funding. This, combined with the effects of the recession on training demands and budgets, and the problems of placement of trainees with employers and into jobs, leaves us with an almost unsolvable problem without further funds."

She says that the TEC is struggling to manage but is far from achieving an acceptable position as yet.

The City and Inner London North TEC says:

"The most recent figures indicate that there are around 490 young people on the waiting lists of YT providers and another 461 on Careers Service waiting lists."

The Dorset TEC said that it was struggling to manage but that it might manage

"with the provisos that the average length of stay on the scheme remains one year".

It is supposed to be a two-year scheme. In Germany, it is three years. Yet the Dorset TEC said that it could manage only if the scheme was cut in half.

Greater Nottingham TEC says:

"the current recession has had the effect of reducing the number of employer placements available. Without these placements YT providers are unable to provide the "job training" required for National Vocational Qualifications, secure contributions from employers towards the cost of training and, consequently, meet the guarantee of a YT place."

It cannot meet the guarantee. It said:

"We are working closely on this matter with the Careers Service, who advise us that currently we have outstanding approximately 800 youngsters".

The Greater Peterborough TEC says:

"Within the Youth Training programme we have about 150 young people actively seeking a place for training who at the moment have not been given an offer . . . the fundamental problem is that the unit cost on which the funds are allocated being for this programme are too low . . . we would hope that more money will be available to meet the guarantee because again, it is not a genuine guarantee, it is a demand-led guarantee and if we are funded on the basis of historical take-up this is bound to change when the economic climate changes, as has been experienced recently. If it were a guarantee then we should be funded accordingly."

The Heart of England TEC says:

"there will be an estimated likely shortfall of 400-450 places."

Northamptonshire TEC says bluntly:

"It became clear to us in the early summer that we would not be fulfilling our Youth Training guarantee."

Lincolnshire TEC says:

"The funding package assumes a contribution towards the overall cost of the training from employers, usually by paying wages or meeting the allowance cost in the case of unemployed trainees. A high proportion of trainees are placed with small employers . . . Without that contribution the funding package simply does not add up."

The Central England TEC tells us that the system of "funding must be commensurate with the Government's guarantee. This has not been the case so far this year with several results",

one of which is that

"Government credibility has been severely tarnished, particularly with regard to perceived dedication to improved training."

Humberside TEC says that it cannot get employer placements, so it is not getting "NVG III provisions" and the quality of training is falling.

The Isle of Wight TEC says that it notified the Department of Employment in August that it might be unable to meet the YT guarantee within the funds allocated for the purpose. It says:

"Such concentration on meeting the Government guarantee, and use of funds originally earmarked for other purposes for YT, inevitably means that other aspects of our proposed programme may suffer and that we also neglect the long term development of Youth Training itself."

Manchester TEC tells us that there are

"between 1,200-2,000 young people in the Guarantee Group wanting to join YT for whom there were unlikely to be places available before Christmas."

Milton Keynes TEC says:

"495 young people are registered with the local Careers Office with 14 notified job vacancies and no Youth Training vacancies."

I have a thick wad of these letters which I would love to read out, so that they would be put on the record. However, I want to leave sufficient time for the Minister to answer.

Where does that leave the Government's so-called guarantee? Looking pretty sick. Some TECs have told us that it is not their guarantee but the Government's. Under the YT programme, the Government are paying less and expect the employer to pay more. The scheme is based on employer participation, TECs cannot deliver without employers and their contribution, but the employers have given no guarantees and recognise none.

Due to the recession, employers are struggling to survive. They are making many staff redundant, and they are largely pulling out of the programme, thus leaving a huge hole in numbers and finance.

TECs do not themselves provide programmes; they contract out to training providers. However, trainers are also pulling out, because the sums do not add up, it is not worth their while and quality is suffering.

The Minister will know of one trainer, Astra Training Services, because he paid it to take the skill centres away. Astra says:

"many training providers are currently in financial difficulties and are leaving the training market. This damage to the training infrastructure may take years to repair . . . The current Government funding regimes for both ET and YT are reducing the numbers of providers and offer insufficient incentives to encourage new organisations to enter the market."

It also tells us:

"Although there are now additional opportunities to expand our share of the YT market, the funding arrangements are considered inadquate to make such a move worthwhile. There is evidence to suggest that both ET and YT providers are finding the current funding insufficient to justify a continuing role. Some have withdrawn voluntarily; others have been forced into liquidation by their creditors. Thus whilst there are increasing opportunities to bid for a larger share of this business, it would be financially imprudent to do so."

So the trainers are pulling out. In my area of east London, the TEC has asked the careers service to canvass for places because the training providers are not coming up with them. I am not criticising the TEC: it does not have the resources.

What, finally, is the reality? What is the convoluted chain of command? The Government proclaim their commitment. The TECs are given the responsibility. The employers, although they are expected to contribute, do not want to know. Many training providers pull out because it is not worth it. At the end of the line, the local authority careers service is called in to rescue what remains of this shambles. That is the much-vaunted commitment. That is the travesty of the guarantee.

The way forward is for the Government to admit that the guarantee is not being delivered and that it is being overwhelmed by the recession. They must go back to the drawing board and review the whole of youth training. They should sit down with some of us who are interested in these matters and draw up a quality scheme that works. Otherwise, they will continue to fail thousands of our young people and our country's training needs.

10.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on raising this important topic. The House knows that he takes a great personal interest in the training of young people, not only in his constituency but by virtue of his chairmanship of the Select Committee on Employment.

First, I reiterate the Government's guarantee to young people. It is that all young people under 18 who are not in full-time education or a job and who are seeking youth training are entitled to be offered and, if necessary, re-offered any number of times entry to a suitable YT programme and to receive such training. All young people falling into that category but over the age of 18 who have not been available for YT because of disability, ill health, pregnancy, a custodial sentence, remand or language difficulty are entitled to an offer of a suitable YT programme and to receive such training. That is the guarantee.

Despite the hon. Gentleman's figures, a moment's reflection will enable the House to recognise that managing the delivery of a guarantee of this kind for hundreds of thousands of young people is not a simple, straightforward operation. For a start, there is the question of how to plan and predict the numbers of young people who will exercise their entitlement. We know that there are in principle X young people who could qualify for that entitlement—that information is available from the census—but their choice whether or when to exercise it is not predictable. When one thinks about that, it becomes apparent how complex the matter is.

The first critical factor, which emerged clearly in our debates this year, is the staying-on rate in full-time school and college education. Young people who have completed GCSEs at 16 can choose whether to stay on at school or college, or come out into the labour market and, possibly, take an entitlement to YT. We do not know what the staying-on rate will be until the autumn, and it is capable of further revision during the year.

Many young people—I am in no way blaming them—are unclear about their personal plans. Many will register with the careers service. That is where the hon. Gentleman gets his numbers from. However, they do not necessarily always turn up for an interview when it has been arranged for them. Many of them will be interviewed for YT but will take a job outside YT, and why not? Many may drop a non-YT job or be made redundant from it and then seek entry to a YT course. Many may start a YT course and leave it to take a job. Such considerations make it difficult to anticipate the numbers involved. They also shed light on the excessively clear figures produced by the hon. Gentleman—those figures are partial.

Despite the figures cited by the hon. Gentleman, planning and managing the delivery of the YT guarantee is not and cannot be an exact science by the nature of the case. Nevertheless, the Government stand firmly by the guarantee. However, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government have accepted for some time that particular difficulties might be experienced in certain TEC areas. The hon. Gentleman is aware that we have been in close touch with each TEC in recent months about the position in its area.

We have always said that no TEC would be prevented by lack of resources from meeting the guarantee. We have negotiated with TECs where demand has been shown to warrant it. The hon. Gentleman appeared to misunderstand that, where demand has been shown and where a TEC has used the resources available to it, we have authorised the provision of further places. We shall do so again if experience shows that it is needed.

During the debate on the Loyal Address, the Secretary of State confirmed that we have reached agreement with the great majority of TECs so that they have the resources to deliver the YT guarantee. A handful of TECs have not yet reached full agreement, but we are continuing in negotiation with them.

As the position relating to school leavers is clarified—it is not yet clarified because people may choose in January of February to leave school—or as new information becomes available, some TECs may find it necessary to bid for additional resources. We will be prepared to discuss that.

The system assumes a close and continuing dialogue between the TECs and the Government. There is also a dialogue between the Select Committee and the TECs, which is fine. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of the Committee, on his initiative on opening that dialogue, which is in line with the spirit of the TEC movement. However, the hon. Gentleman should be careful about the way in which he handles that correspondence.

The hon. Gentleman quoted from recent correspondence and it is important to remember that everything depends critically on timing. I have already demonstrated that by drawing attention to the uncertainties surrounding the planning. Very few TECs would have been able to answer before the deadline of 14 October with any actual knowledge of the extent of the staying-on rate this autumn. However, the TECs were required to answer before that deadline and most answered in September. Perhaps I should have asked the hon. Gentleman the date of the letters from which he quoted.

The facts about the staying-on rate emerged only in October. As the House knows, there has been a marked and welcome increase in the staying-on rate in full-time education. We are all pleased about that. As a result, the

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

gloomy apprehensions that were widely entertained in September have not been realised, because of the facts that emerged in October and November.

Mr. Leighton: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman had a fair crack of the whip and I must conclude soon.

I do not like to chide the hon. Gentleman, but he must be careful about causing alarm and confusion about the national state of the YT guarantee by quoting from the TEC letters. I would also level that charge, perhaps more pointedly, at the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who unashamedly used those letters in a debate a week ago. The fact is that only one TEC was quoted as not meeting the guarantee, but there is an offer on the table of further underpinning money.

I could bandy quotations with the hon. Member for Newham, North-East. If one considers the letters from the TECs—I emphasise that they were sent at a time when the facts about the staying-on rates were not yet available and the predictions were gloomy—which were quoted in the recent debate, it is clear that significant passages were omitted.

Wolverhampton TEC said:

"We expect to meet the Government's guarantees on both ET and YT."

What could be clearer? The Heart of England TEC, which the hon. Member for Sedgefield quoted in that debate, said:

"Providing our estimates of those entering the YT and ET guarantee groups over the next few weeks remain accurate"—

it recognised the timing problem—

"and sufficient placements are forthcoming, the guarantees in Oxfordshire can be met."

Shropshire TEC, which was also quoted in that debate, said that it expects to meet the YT guarantee and foresees no difficulty meeting the ET guarantee.

I could continue quoting TECs ad nauseum. At the time of that exercise, most of the TECs were confident about meeting YT guarantees and, in the light of the staying-on figures. They are even more confident now.

I wish to emphasise the positive features of the YT programme which I know the hon. Member for Newham, North-East appreciates. There are 260,000 young people in training in England and Wales—data for Scotland are not available. That is a huge number. Since 1983, we have trained more than 3·1 million young people on YTS and YT. We have increased the financial provision for YT, including training credits, from £842 million in 1991 to £853 million in 1992, which is a vast increase in expenditure since we came into office 10 years ago. Some 87 per cent. of those who complete YT go into jobs or further education; 66 per cent. of those who complete YT gain a qualification; and 80 per cent. of YT trainees say, when asked about it, that they found the experience useful or very useful.

Despite the criticism and even hostility that Opposition Members and members of the Labour movement sometimes express, the YT programme has been a considerable success. I urge the Opposition to weigh their words on the matter because some of their comments may be reported outside the House in a way that would damage a cause that they share with us—the interests of youth training. It is important that young people should not be given the impression, for whatever reason, that youth training is inadequate or unavailable, or that there is no point in their applying for it. There are 260,000 young people on YT schemes in England and Wales and many opportunities exist.

I urge the hon. Member for Newham, North-East to support the youth training programme and not to use language that may give the impression to people who are not in a position to understand that the programme is not worth applying for because they may not find a place, or that it is hopelessly overstretched. The programme is good and successful, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Order for consideration read.

To be considered tomorrow.

TORQUAY MARKET BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That the Bill shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the last Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table.

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Monday 25 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Royal Air Force

1. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what he plans to do with the aircraft taken from the front-line strength of the Royal Air Force under "Options for Change".

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Some will be used in fleet management or as long-term reserve; others will be disposed of.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that surplus aircraft will not be supplied to the evil dictator of Indonesia? Will the discussions between the Secretary of State and that dictator on 19 September about military co-operation now be ended in view of last week's massacre in illegally occupied East Timor?

Mr. Clark: I know that the hon. Lady would like to get rid of every aircraft in the Royal Air Force if she could. However, that view is not shared by the House or, I believe, by the hon. Lady's management committee. All export controls of armaments and all our customers are subject to the most rigorous control and scrutiny, as she knows. I certainly do not intend to reveal any of the discussions between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the leader of another state, as they would have to be confidential.

Mr. Wilkinson: My right hon. Friend will know that reserve aeroplanes cannot simply be trundled out of a hangar and launched into the air. What provision is my right hon. Friend making to ensure that there will be enough reserve air and ground crews to fly and maintain those aeroplanes in an emergency?

Mr. Clark: There are three categories of readiness: one month's recovery, three months' recovery and six months' recovery. As the reduction in the strength of the Royal Air Force in terms of air frames proceeds, there will be a number of crews on whom we can call should it be necessary to reactivate those aircraft.

Trident

2. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total estimated annual operating costs of Trident for the first five years of operation.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): We do not expect the running costs of the Trident force to be significantly different from those of Polaris.

Mr. Mullin: That is about £2 billion for the first five years. Is not it madness to be spending billions of pounds on a missile system which does not deter and may not work —and when we have no one at whom to point it? Cannot the Secretary of State think of better uses for the perhaps upwards of £20 billion which will be spent on the Trident missile system in capital and investments?

Mr. Hamilton: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman should come out with those remarks about the deterrent in which we are investing just when his party is purporting to change its policy. Presumably he is about to resign the Whip, or something of that sort, from the Labour party in this place.

The nuclear deterrent has been very effective in ensuring the security of the west over the past 40 years. We are now left with major nuclear arsenals in Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan and there is great uncertainty hanging over those areas. It is a wise precaution to ensure that we continue to have the nuclear deterrent which has served us so well in the past.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Trident really is the queen of the defence chessboard and that many of us believe that the price that we have to pay for it is well worth paying? Will he confirm that there is a good argument for at least one European country having nuclear weapons?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. Spending on defence is a way of reducing the chances of war. To that extent, the nuclear deterrent is very good value for money. I hope that the day when European defence does not rely solely on British and French deterrents will not come to pass, but there is clearly a risk that it could happen some time.

Mr. Douglas: Having made a comparison with Polaris, how does the Minister reconcile having a strategic deterrent which is primarily devoted to NATO purposes when NATO is abandoning nuclear weapons to a considerable degree and when NATO per se would have no Soviet target for Trident?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, NATO is not abandoning nuclear deterrents. Some ranges of nuclear weapons are being eliminated and we totally support that. All the pronouncements from NATO of late have been to the effect that we regard nuclear deterrents as an important part of the armoury of NATO forces generally.

Helicopters

3. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to replace the Wessex helicopter used for search and rescue work with Sea King or other 24-hour capability helicopters.

Mr. Alan Clark: I hope to be in a position to make an announcement early next year.

Mr. Speller: I thank my right hon. Friend for anticipating an announcement some time next year. Is he aware that, off the north Devon coast, our search and rescue capacity is 30 minutes away at RAF Brawdy? Excellent though that capacity is, on a cold wintry night it is too far away. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to provide not only the extra helicopters that are needed but the extra security that is desperately needed all the way across the Bristol channel.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend poses several questions on the subject. I hope that they will not be interpreted as questioning the adequacy of existing services. The House will be interested to know that, in the six months since my hon. Friend last questioned me on the subject, there have been 992 call-outs from RAF Chivenor and 591 people have been assisted. I pay tribute to the RAF crews concerned and to their skill, dedication and courage, often in very difficult circumstances.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister understand that what he has just said underlines the public's high regard for search and rescue services provided by the Royal Air Force, particularly in a constituency such as mine, where RAF Leuchars is situated? It is well known that the Government have received an offer to privatise search and rescue services. In the light of what the Minister said and the undoubted expertise of the Royal Air Force in such matters, will he undertake that that expertise and high public regard will not be lightly thrown away?

Mr. Clark: I am grateful for what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said. Our commitment in air-sea rescue is to those at risk. We shall continue to meet the criteria laid down by the Department of Transport. What is the most cost-effective and efficient way of achieving those ends remains to be decided after proper examination.

Mr. Ian Bruce: What plans does my right hon. Friend have to continue air-sea rescue from Portland in my constituency? Does he have plans to extend operations during night time as well as day time? When is it envisaged that the new Merlin helicopter will be on site in Portland?

Mr. Clark: I have nothing to add to the present state of knowledge on plans for Portland and I have no knowledge that the EH101 utility variant is to be used in the air-sea rescue role, at least in the predictable future.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that the almost 1,000 call-outs in the past six months reinforce the need to keep open all our bases on the western coast and that the proposed closures of RAF Brawdy, or Chivenor in north Devon, will leave part of our western coast vulnerable during dangerous times, particularly if there is no 24-hour operability? Will the Minister look yet again at the proposed closures, especially RAF Brawdy? If that versatile base is closed there will be an enormous impact on the local economy, especially when combined with the closure of the Royal Navy base at Trecwn.

Mr. Clark: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to make such comments. We are all used to the hypocrisy and double standards of the Labour party, whose representatives hang around every factory gate and base saying what terrible things will happen locally. Yet nationally, as we know, it is committed—indeed, it is under instructions from its confereence—to cut defence spending by £6 billion. There will be no announcement about the bases until the new year. I repeat the undertaking that I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) a moment ago. We shall at all times continue to meet the criteria laid down by the Department of Transport.

Trident

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected date of commissioning of the first Trident nuclear submarine and the expected date of completion of the programme; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress with the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The overall Trident programme continues to progress to time and within budget towards an in-service date of the mid-1990s. It is not our practice to make public the precise dates of submarine construction or related programmes.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister confirm that the total cost of the Trident programme is likely to be over £23 billion, that it is a monstrous waste of money, that to hold nuclear weapons is immoral and that in the interests of world peace he should cancel the programme and provide useful work for the highly skilled people who have manufactured those awful weapons of mass destruction?

Mr. Clark: I am sure that it is perfectly possible for the hon. Gentleman to make a trip to Barrow-in-Furness and explain to the work force there what useful work is available for them. I welcome what he said. He articulates a view which is widely shared on the Opposition Benches, although the Labour party finds it seemly to repress it at

present. Certainly, it does no harm to ventilate that view in this place. I always welcome hearing it when it is delivered so lucidly from the mouth of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I would correct the hon. Gentleman on one point of fact. The cost of the system is already £1·8 billion less than the original estimate announced in the House in 1982.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his commitment to the Trident programme. Does he believe that it would be safe in the hands of Members of Parliament who continually carp and criticise? Would it be safe in the hands of a party two thirds of whose members are committed to one-sided nuclear disarmament?

Mr. Clark: This question is best answered by the remarks of the hon. Member for Islington, North, who courageously and clearly articulated the views of, I suspect, more than half the Members on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Why did the Minister's Department authorise Admiral Sir Julian Oswald to give information to the press on the specific question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), when Ministers continually refuse to answer that question in the House? Is not it reasonable that the House of Commons should be given the same information as is made available to the press in briefings? Does the Minister accept that it is entirely unsatisfactory to continue stonewalling on those questions while answering them in the press?

Mr. Clark: The boat will be launched early next year, but I must maintain the position that I and my predecessors have always maintained—that we do not disclose any further details in the House.

Mr. Franks: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government have only one policy on Trident—to build the fourth boat and complete the programme? That is unlike the Opposition, who have at least three conflicting policies—one for the Front Bench, a second for Back-Bench CND Members and, most disgraceful of all, a third for the electorate in Barrow.

Mr. Clark: That is absolutely right. I confirm what my hon. Friend says. We are interested in receiving a report of what took place when the Leader of the Oppositon went to Barrow and had a chat with the work force. He gave them several assurances, with which, apparently, they were satisfied, but the right hon. Gentleman will not give details of the assurances. That is certainly a subject on which the House would welcome further enlightenment.

Mr. Boyes: Will the Minister now acknowledge that Labour party policy is to deploy the Trident system? When will the Government place an order for the fourth Trident boat and how much money have the Government already spent on it? Does he realise that his policy of drip-feeding the yard with funding for the fourth boat is unnecessarily extending the lives of the Polaris boats and jeopardising the employment of thousands of workers at Barrow, simply to safeguard the seat of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks)?

Mr. Clark: I did not entirely follow the hon. Gentleman's question. In so far as I did understand it, I welcome his commitment of the Labour party to the Trident programme. I understood him to reproach us for being slow in commissioning the fourth vessel. If so, that is an instructive and important addition to the Labour party's nuclear policy and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reminds me, is a fourth arm in such a policy.

Infantry Regiments

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the difference in cost to the Ministry of Defence of one infrantry regiment with two infantry battalions and two regiments of one battalion each.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): The average cost of an infantry battalion is £12·5 million to £15 million in the United Kingdom and £17 million in Germany, irrespective of how it is organised regimentally.

Mr. Colvin: I expected a reply somewhat like that. What my right hon. Friend said makes it clear that there will not be a great saving to the Ministry of Defence. If the amalgamation of the Royal Hampshire Regiment with the Queen's Regiment is part of the price of a reorganised and more efficient Army, the retention of the Royal Hampshires' name within the title of the new regiment must be part of the price of the amalgamation. Will he confirm that that would be possible?

Mr. King: I know that my hon. Friend will be fair and will recognise that the Queen's Regiment is an amalgamation of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, the East Surrey Regiment, the Royal Sussex Regiment, the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment and the Middlesex Regiment. I remember seeing those regimental names on the cemetery wall at Kranji in Singapore a month ago. They were all fine regiments which had to suffer the disappointment of amalgamation. Now the Royal Hampshire Regiment faces the same challenge and I know that it and the Queen's Regiment will wish to approach amalgamation in the most sensible and realistic way in the interests of both regiments.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State confirm that whatever savings the Ministry of Defence may make by the regimental amalgamations proposed in "Options for Change", there will be considerable on-costs to the public purse, through expenditure on unemployment and housing benefits? What are the Ministry of Defence estimates of the costs of that and what attempts are his Department making to cover some of those costs?

Mr. King: That is the most amazing question that I have heard in the House. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has just announced that our plans for defence expenditure involve a cut of 6 per cent. in real terms during the next three to four years. The hon. Gentleman represents a party that has called for a 50 per cent. cut in defence expenditure in real terms by the end of the decade. What impact will that have on unemployment and housing benefits and every other consideration?

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Who bears the cost of the new uniforms in any amalgamated regiment? Is it true that the Army will contribute £10 to each uniform and that officers and others will have to pay any further costs? Secondly,

what redundancy arrangements are being made for members of the amalgamated regiments who will not be needed for the defence of the nation?

Mr. King: On the first point, the usual uniform arrangements will apply as on previous occasions. I shall look into the matter that my hon. Friend has raised, because it covers a whole range of issues—resettlements and redundancy arrangements—and we are anxious that the fairest arrangements should be made.

There was a misunderstanding in my hon. Friend's question. There will be redundancies in the Army, as in every armed force of any significance in the western world, but the Army Board intends that redundancies should be spread evenly throughout the Army and that people in the regiments facing amalgamation will not be discriminated against or at a disadvantage, compared with those whose regiments may not be so affected. I hope that that is understood, because it is a very important point.

Mr. O'Neill: Now that the Secretary of State has issued the timetable for the mergers of the regiments, can he confirm that, in the unlikely event of a Conservative victory, there is no prospect of the Scottish regiments' future being reviewed?

Mr. King: I have made it clear that the decisions have been taken. We have set out the timetable. The assessments made by the defence staff establish the right shape for our defences for the 1990s. The only real risk to regiments, as against the programme that we have set out, is a change of Government. If either of the Opposition parties was elected, many of the regiments that face amalgamation now would face certain disbandment.

Mr. Mans: When my right hon. Friend considers how different regiments have merged, will he take into account, rather than discourage, the concept of the big regiment and ensure that in future the Army is organised in big regiments?

Mr. King: As my hon. Friend knows, that was considered carefully by the Army when it looked into the best way to approach the reorganisation. I cannot go further. Obviously, the Army has recognised the role of the big regiment, but the role of other regiments with a particularly strong and well-established tradition was recognised and the Army Board also took account of those sensitivities.

Arms Trade

8. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new initiatives he has to further policies of achieving transparency in the world arms trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the first committee of the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution recommending to the assembly the establishment of a universal and non-discriminatory register of arms transfers.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister alarmed by the news that appeared in the *New York Times* last Friday of the help that China has given to Algeria and North Korea in the advanced development of their nuclear weapons and by the fact that a new arms race for conventional and nuclear weapons is roaring ahead at an unprecedented rate? Would not the best way to advance transparency in world arms sales and achieve a United Nations register be for Britain now to declare that we shall have transparency and a register of Britain's arms sales?

Mr. Clark: I make allowances for the fact that the hon. Gentleman clearly prepared his supplementary before the news was announced. It might have been slightly more gracious of him to pay tribute to the work of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in getting this universal and non-discriminatory register of arms transfers recommended to the Assembly. I pay tribute to the work of the United Kingdom delegation. One of my officials chairs the experts committee that laid the groundwork for this achievement. On reflection, the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is far better for all nuclear powers and principal arms manufacturers to move forward together, rather than for any one to break ranks and anticipate matters.

I entirely agree that China's transfer of technology to other aspirant nuclear powers is deplorable. We must all do our best to make the non-proliferation treaty work effectively and, if necessary, give it more teeth.

Mr. Batiste: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our friends and allies round the world who may be faced with potentially aggressive neighbours are entitled to look to us for support in arms sales, for example, of the Challenger tank which is made in Leeds, and that nothing proposed on restricting arms sales generally in the interests of world peace will prevent us from supporting our allies in circumstances where that is necessary?

Mr. Clark: Yes, of course. It is a cardinal principle of free determination that independent states have the right to determine their spending priorities. Unilateral action by the United Kingdom to stop defence sales would not stop the arms trade or bring about peace and security.

Departmental Properties

9. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses currently owned by his Department and defence establishments are standing empty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, 9,966 Ministry of Defence owned houses and flats were vacant of which 9,834 were service married quarters. Many of those properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, some 1,700 dwellings were in the process of being sold.

Mr. Ashton: In view of that enormous number of empty dwellings, will the Minister give an assurance that none of the 1,600 wives—and their children—whose husbands have left them will be evicted? What will happen when another 40,000 military personnel are made redundant as a result of the White Paper proposals? Will there be any evictions? Will the Minister assure the House that empty houses will be handed over to local councils or housing associations for rent either to redundant service men or to others? Will he assure the House that the empty properties will not be sold off and service personnel and their families turned onto the street?

Mr. Hamilton: We attempt to treat the wives and ex-wives of service men living illegally in some of our properties as sympathetically as we can and that is why the 1,600 to whom the hon. Gentleman referred live in service accommodation.

The figure of 40,000 redundancies is not right. For the Army we are talking about in excess of 10,000 redundancies and much of the other reductions will occur through natural wastage. A housing task force has been set up under my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces and he is considering how we can use the existing housing stock to alleviate problems. In particular, he will consider the problems faced by those who come back from Germany who may be made redundant and ensure that they have somewhere to live while they are looking for a job. We are addressing that issue now. However, the number of vacant dwellings will probably increase while the running down of the Army continues.

Dame Janet Fookes: What consideration is my hon. Friend giving to the scheme put forward by the services charity, SSAFA—the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association—to deal with redundant housing stock?

Mr. Hamilton: The SSAFA is in close touch with the Department at all times and we listen to what it has to say about problems associated with housing and everything else. We are listening hard to its recommendations and we take seriously the points that it makes to us.

Mr. O'Neill: We welcome the working party that has been established to deal with the housing issue. However, does the Minister recognise that there is an increasing problem of homelessness and squatting among ex-service personnel? Since the MOD housing stock is being sold off and other houses are being renovated and improved slowly, does the hon. Gentleman accept that the situation will not get better in the foreseeable future unless far greater urgency is given to the problem of properly housing and properly treating our service personnel and those whom we consider are no longer needed in our forces?

Mr. Hamilton: We are well aware of this problem and the last thing we want is ex-service men having to live in temporary accommodation. For that reason, we are making the best use of married quarters to ensure that people are not forced into such temporary accommodation.

Sir Giles Shaw: Does my hon. Friend accept that the problem raised by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is probably the most crucial element in the redundancy programme to which my hon. Friend has referred? The priority given to resettlement through access to housing will probably be the greatest determinant of the fairness of Government policy on redundancy.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed, I accept what my hon. Friend says. There is a difficult Catch-22 situation because people cannot get a job until they have housing and they cannot get a mortgage until they have a job. Therefore, it is important that we solve the problem of where redundant people live so that they are able to get jobs, raise a mortgage and buy their own homes. At that stage they will no longer need the married quarters that we make available to them.

Low Flying

11. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from farmers about compensation for the effects of low flying on livestock.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): The Ministry of Defence continues to receive representations from farmers about compensation for the effects of low flying on livestock. No more representations have been made recently than is usual.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware that there is a feeling among farmers that the Ministry is being less helpful than it used to be in dealing with compensation claims arising from low flying by jets or helicopters? Does he recognise, for example, that insisting on veterinary reports may cause problems in that the examinations may cause distress to animals as well as additional cost to the farmer, who may not be compensated?

Mr. Carlisle: We try to be as helpful as possible, and I am aware of the case of Mr. Johnson in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. We require some evidence of loss, either from a vet or an accountant, and as soon as we receive the reports we look at them speedily and with sympathy. Indeed, we always try to give the benefit of the doubt, and the hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that in the last three years we have received 577 claims and have settled 372 of them.

Gulf War

13. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to the United Kingdom of the Gulf war; how much has been recovered from allied nations; and what will be final net cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The additional defence costs of the Gulf conflict, to be spread over several years, are currently estimated to be about £2·5 billion. The bulk of the costs are offset by cash contributions from other Governments, totalling some £2 billion.

Mr. Smith: Is it not clear from that information that not only was the Gulf war a great success in military terms, but that the financial outcome was also most satisfactory from the point of view of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, and I suspect that it has been an almost unique experience in that so much of the cost has been provided by other Governments. We are grateful to all Governments who came forward with cash for the war.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Apart from the fact that we made a profit from the Gulf war, may I ask the Minister to say what else was achieved by it, with Saddam Hussein still in power and carrying out his evil acts and with the dictatorship still in power in Kuwait? Why were our young men sent to their deaths in such a meaningless cause?

Mr. Hamilton: I find that, from start to finish, a most incredible contribution. I thought that I had made it clear that we did not make a profit on the war. It cost £2·5

billion and we got back £2 billion, which means that it cost us £500 million, which does not look to me like a profit. The hon. Gentleman will remember—indeed, his party purported to support the action of the coalition forces—that the objective was to liberate Kuwait. That is precisely what we did.

Mr. Conway: Does the Minister accept that, from the point of view of cost effectiveness, the members of the Territorial Army and the reserve forces who served in the Gulf war were remarkably cost effective? Does he agree that that bodes well for the TA review now under way in ensuring that the TA continues to give value for money and is geographically well balanced?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. Clearly, in the current review of the Territorial Army, we are paying great attention to the need to continue to have a good geographical spread across the country. We pay tribute to the cost effectiveness of the Territorials.

Dr. Reid: If, as the Minister says, we recouped so much money on the Gulf war, may I ask him to explain why the Ministry of Defence is being so mean and tight-fisted towards some of those who were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice during that war? Is the Minister aware, for example, of the considerable number of Territorial Army members who served in the Gulf, including over 20 from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), who have been refused their bounty because they did not serve their annual camp—precisely because they were in the Gulf for over 51 days? That is a scandalous way to treat people who risked their lives and came under repeated Scud attacks for the sake of their country. Will he order an immediate review of those cases with a view to ensuring that nobody is penalised financially purely because of the bravery that they showed and the sacrifice that they were prepared to make for their country?

Mr. Hamilton: What the hon. Gentleman says about members of the Territorial Army being refused their bounty is news to me, so I should be grateful if he would write to me. Of course we shall investigate such cases. As for our being mean and tight-fisted—the hon Gentleman's words—that is certainly not the case. There were very large claims from members of the Territorial Army for loss of earnings and most of them were met in full.

Merchant Shipping

14. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in making available a pool of British-registered merchant ships for emergency defence use.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The need for Government action to ensure that sufficient ships remain on the British register to meet defence needs is under consideration.

Sir John Farr: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that at least one of the lessons that we learnt in the Gulf war will be put into effect so that, should a similar international crisis occur again, more than one in five of those support vessels will fly the red ensign, as was the case in the Gulf war?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I hear what my hon. Friend says. However, Operation Granby proved that it is possible to go out onto the charter market for ships and find ships from many different nations to perform the tasks that we wanted of them. Although not as many red ensign ships supported our troops in the Gulf as might have, the task was carried out economically by other nations.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister accept that the virtual destruction of the British Merchant Navy in the past 12 years has been one of the most severe crimes committed against this country by the present Government? Does he accept that the Government are reducing to fewer than 300 ships the number of vessels that now sail under the red ensign and that they have treated with utter contempt the red ensign, which has served this country well in times of peace and war? Will the Government, extremely belatedly, redress their policies, adopt some of the measures that other western Governments take to defend their merchant fleets, and accept the absurdity of an island state devoid of a merchant navy?

Mr. Hamilton: It is emotional language to talk about the virtual destruction of the British Merchant Navy. Several British shipping companies have chosen to opt out—to flag out—and to run their ships under another organisation. In the circumstances, we are talking about a vast subsidy from taxpayers' money in some form to stop that flagging out taking place. We must discuss carefully whether that is the best way that money should be spent.

Nuclear Weapons Testing

15. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's policy of testing nuclear weapons at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom carries out such tests of nuclear warheads as are necessary to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent. Tests are carried out at the United States Department of Energy's site in Nevada under the terms of the 1958 agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States. We conform to all relevant international treaties related to nuclear testing.

Mr. McAvoy: Will the Minister confirm or deny that a British nuclear test, code-named Bristol, is due to take place soon in Nevada? The House will find it difficult to understand why the country needs another nuclear test, especially when the basic technology has been tested countless times before. Does the Minister recall that last year's EC conference on those issues ended in disagreement over nuclear testing? Which is more valuable—a few more British nuclear tests or a worldwide agreement on stopping all nuclear tests?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is not general practice to confirm or deny that nuclear tests are about to take place. As for the validity of those tests, I remind him that it is important to have effective nuclear warheads, and testing is the only way to establish whether warheads are effective. Whatever the hon. Gentleman's position on nuclear weapons—like many Opposition Back Benchers, he is probably totally against them—he will agree that if we are to have them, they should operate safely. That is one of the benefits of nuclear testing.

Scottish Regiments

17. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on the future of the Scottish regiments and battalions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I have received many such representations and I well understand the depth of feeling on the part of those expressing their concern. However, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said in the recent defence debate, under our restructuring proposals, the proportion of Scottish units in the Army overall will increase rather than decrease.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Secretary of State specify the exact circumstances that led the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Scotland to give the clear impression during the Kincardine and Deeside by-election that a review of that decision was possible? Was that a collective decision by the Tory party or the Cabinet to raise false expectations or were the Ministers acting in a freelance capacity?

Mr. King: The position is precisely clear and has been confirmed. I have made it clear that we have made decisions for the future structure of the Army that will result in a higher proportion of the Army overall being drawn from Scotland—I imagine that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that. Since then we have published the timetable for the amalgamation of regiments, and it was to that fact that my right hon. Friends were perfectly fairly drawing attention.

Princess of Wales RAF Hospital

18. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to conclude a sale of the Princess of Wales RAF hospital, Ely.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect to conclude a sale of the Princess of Wales hospital at RAF Ely at the earliest opportunity commensurate with our responsibility to maximise disposal receipts.

Mr. Paice: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he accept the view of the local district health authority that it is absolutely essential that the core facility of the hospital should be available for the district health authority to provide treatment through the NHS? Will he ensure that when considering any bids, any prospective purchases for the hospital, the needs of the health authority will be borne in mind?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, of course, I can give my hon. Friend that undertaking. We shall continue to confer with the local health authority. We have been in touch with it about the proposed sale of the site and will continue to be.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Has my right hon. Friend seen the excellent report of Lancaster health authority, a copy of which I sent him, showing the immense progress that it has made during the past year —all within its budget? Is he aware of the vast increase since 1979 in the number of hip operations—from 60 to 197—in knee operations—from 16 to 90—and in cataracts of 216 to 685. Is he aware that when the hospital becomes a trust it will make even more rapid progress being run by local people for local people?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that excellent report to my attention. I think that patients can see that the reforms are working—there are better clinic hours, with evening and out-of-hours clinics, and improvements in service and the patients' environment. Such improvements are taking place in Lancaster and elsewhere, and I have no doubt that they will continue to take place everywhere.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to join me in expressing joy at the release of Terry Waite and Tom Sutherland from their long and terrible captivity? May I also express—as I am sure he will —boundless admiration for the great courage and inner strength shown by the two men and all the other released hostages. Those qualities were brilliantly manifested yet again in the remarkable speech by Terry Waite at RAF Lyneham at lunchtime today. Will the Prime Minister join me in thanking everyone, including the service given by the British Government, who have worked and still work to secure the release of hostages? I particularly thank the United Nations Secretary-General and his envoy, Mr. Picco. Does the Prime Minister agree that the statement by Terry Waite's captors that they now recognise that they did wrong and that what they did has served no useful purpose should be understood by all those who engage in the vile practice of taking hostages, anywhere?

The Prime Minister: I agree unreservedly with the right hon. Gentleman's comments and believe that they will be echoed throughout the country. This morning I spoke briefly to Terry Waite while he was on board the aircraft returning home and was able to express the delight that I and the whole country felt at his safe return and at Mr. Sutherland's release. We owe a great deal to the United Nations Secretary-General and to Mr. Picco who have worked tirelessly with others to secure the release of the hostages. In welcoming the release of Mr. Waite and Mr. Sutherland, may I express the hope that none of us forget that there are still more hostages whom we wish to see speedily returned to their homes. The developments that we have seen vindicate the policy of not doing deals with hostage takers. I share the right hon. Gentleman's view about the remarks by the hostage takers. Let us hope that the lesson has been learnt and that never again shall we see this vile practice recur.

Q2. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shepherd: During his busy day, will my right hon. Friend take time to look at the Harris poll in last Sunday's issue of *The Observer* which clearly showed that two thirds of the people of this country, including 60 per cent. of Labour voters, support my right hon. Friend's policy of reducing the standard rate of tax from 25p to 20p in the pound? Is it not clear that at the next general election the public will face a clear choice between lower personal taxes under a Conservative Government or swingeing increased taxes under Labour?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend certainly puts the point crisply, and I entirely agree with him. Conservatives believe that people should be left with as much as possible of their own money to spend in their own interests, in the clear belief that they will spend it better in their interests than any Government will do for them. We leave it to the Opposition to advocate higher taxes. That is not our view.

Mr. Watson: Is the Prime Minister aware that under the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees, to which this country is a signatory, all Governments are obliged to provide asylum to those fleeing from serious human rights violations? Given that the Asylum Bill will deny genuine asylum seekers entry to this country,—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Yes it will, and the few who slip through the net will be denied legal aid to argue their case. Will the Prime Minister tell us how his Government will meet their obligations under the convention?

The Prime Minister: The Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will not deter genuine asylum seekers. It will prevent the misuse of asylum procedures while protecting the position of genuine refugees. It seeks to accelerate decision making, and it will find strong support in the House and in the country.

Q3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will not agree to binding minimum rates of income tax in Europe, which have been advocated by the Socialist Confederation in Europe and are supported by the Labour party in this country?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. If the Labour party has signed European documents to that effect, I hope that it will have the courtesy to place them in the Library so that we may all see them. It is clearly Labour's vision to have high tax rates, but it is the hope of the people of this country to have the lowest possible tax rates, and that is what we shall offer.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Prime Minister agree that the draft proposals on economic and monetary union and on political union involve far-reaching constitutional change to our present arrangements? If he does, why does he reject the sovereignty of the British people in taking the final decision on the matter in a post-legislative referendum?

The Prime Minister: Because we are a parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the importance of the popular music industry and its contribution to overseas earnings? Would he echo the view of music lovers everywhere about the release of a certain rap record which shows the statesmanlike approach of the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's suggestion is tempting, but I have not heard the record and I am not sure whether it ought to be released.

Q4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Prime Minister recall that, in 1962, when he packed up work to look after his parents, he received unemployment benefit under the terms of the legislation introduced by the Labour Government of 1945-50? Is he aware that anyone placed in that predicament today, and who decided to go on the dole so as to look after his sick parents, would not receive a single penny piece? Who is the person responsible for that change? It is none other than the Prime Minister who, as Minister for Social Security, introduced measures to prevent people from receiving benefit in those circumstances. Coming from a man who claims to be in favour of the classless society, is that not hypocrisy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should, for once, get his facts straight and stick to them. I remind him that great improvements have been made not only in the amount of assistance that is available to people who are unemployed, but in the amount of assistance to ensure that people receive training so that they can get back into work. When the last Labour Government left office—*[Interruption]*—there were 6,000 training jobs. There are now 350,000.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us settle down.

Mr. Gale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in sharp contrast to the open-door policy apparently espoused by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and his party, the measures contained in the Asylum Bill will be fair and of great benefit to genuine asylum seekers?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am happy to confirm that. It is necessary to provide a proper asylum law to make sure that genuine refugees can be dealt with speedily and adequately. Without the Asylum Bill, that would no longer be the case.

Q5. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: Why is it that £22·50 is spent on advertising and publicity for each expatriate voter who chooses to record his vote in this country, while only one tenth of a penny is spent in the United Kingdom encouraging people to vote? Is this one of the reasons why 1 million people are

missing off the electoral register? What does the Prime Minister intend to do between now and a general election to put those 1 million people back on the register?

The Prime Minister: Both at home and abroad, the intention is to ensure that the people who are entitled to vote are aware of that fact. The hon. Gentleman should ask himself why he is so keen to see people who are entitled to vote not able to do so.

Q6. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: Has my right hon. Friend noted the vote of parents in Gravesham, in the case of one school by a margin of nine to one, to take control over the management of their schools through grant-maintained status? Has he also noted the Labour party's policy proposal to reverse the decision of the parents and to claw back the education funds concerned to a centralised bureaucracy?

The Prime Minister: There is nothing surprising in the Labour party's policies on that. It dislikes choice and parents having authority and power. We are determined to give both choice and power back to parents and that is why more schools are becoming grant maintained. After the general election, an avalanche of schools will seek to become grant maintained.

Q7. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunnachie: In what circumstances would the Prime Minister contemplate using nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: The Government's position has always been clear—nuclear weapons are there as a deterrent. The difference between our position and that of the Labour party is that people accept that we would be prepared to use nuclear weapons and know that Labour Members would not be, so they would not have a deterrent. That is why the Opposition's defence policy is incredible.

Q8. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reduction of the inflation rate to 3·7 per cent. is extremely good news for business, for householders and for those on a fixed income, and will he continue the policy of reducing the inflation rate?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that that is our intention. The present inflation rate is, of course, precisely one half of the inflation rate when it was at its very lowest—just briefly —under the previous Labour Government.

Rev. Martin Smyth: This nation has been a nation of volunteers. How can we encourage volunteering if we cut community volunteering and the numbers engaged in the territorial volunteer reserves?

The Prime Minister: We are examining and consulting on the particular position of the Territorial Army. As for volunteering generally, the hon. Gentleman will know that there has been a vast increase in volunteering in the whole range of voluntary services in the last decade. That has been a continuing trend. I welcome that and we encourage it.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I will put together the next eight motions on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

JUDGES (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (ISLE OF MAN)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Isle of Man) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (MOROCCO)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Morocco) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (PAPUA NEW GUINEA)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Papua New Guinea) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Czechoslovakia) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (ICELAND)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Iceland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (FINLAND)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (DENMARK)

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Denmark) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Education (Schools) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I should inform the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I drew your attention to a series of questions which I tabled for written answer but which the Ministry of Defence refused to answer. You will have seen in earlier exchanges today, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), that the Minister again refused to answer. As I understand it, there was a convention in the Ministry of Defence that certain questions tabled by hon. Members were not answered.

However, in recent months the Ministry appears to have started the practice of authorising information to be supplied to the press which covers exactly the same ground as the questions tabled. Surely you have always deprecated the possibility that Ministers agree to brief the press but not to give the same information to the House. Will you consider the series of questions and take action to ensure that, if information is provided to newspapers or to television, it should also be provided to the House?

Mr. Speaker: It is not my function—the House knows this—to monitor answers given to questions. I heard what the hon. Gentleman had to say when I called him to ask a supplementary question today. I can say only that if—if—information is given to the press, it should equally be given to the House.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No point of order arises. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Rogers: It is when it is impossible for hon. Members and for members of the Opposition Front Bench to obtain answers from the Ministry of Defence. When we table questions, we often receive a monosyllabic "no" or a refusal to answer, but information is given to the press which is not available to hon. Members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I have heard this said ever since I have been in the House of Commons.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it does take up a lot of time.

Mr. Dickens: Did you notice this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition asked one sensible question? Did you also notice how many Back Benchers managed to put a question to the Prime Minister as a result? Would not that be a wonderful practice for the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order, but it enables more hon. Members to ask questions.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although we all welcome the release of Terry Waite and Tom Sutherland, will the Government make a statement on why they reached a deal with terrorist groups? I understood that the Government would not enter into any deals, so will the Prime Minister or the appropriate Minister make a statement, because it is important that we hear their views?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me; it is a matter for the Government.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which is directly to do with you. All of us in the House are great admirers of Sir Winston Churchill. However, before the names of rooms in the House are changed—such as the Harcourt Room being renamed the Churchill Room—is it not right that, as when Ernest Bevin's bust was put in a place to which the whole House agreed, before names are changed willy-nilly to suit some people, the House is asked its opinion? Otherwise any self-appointed or unrepresentative person can change what they like. The House belongs to its Members, and its Members should be consulted.

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, it was done on the advice of the Services Committee which no longer exists. The hon. Gentleman should raise the matter with the new Finance and Services Committee. I do not know whether the change has taken place, so no doubt it will listen to his views.

I think that we should get on with the debate. I have already said that I have not been able to select the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill gives effect to the main provisions of the parents charter, which we launched a month or two ago. It represents a further massive step in the direction of giving parents more power and influence over the education of their own children. It will also enable parents to exercise a more effective and a more real choice of school for their children.

Two key points of policy are encompassed by the Bill. The first is to provide for performance tables to be published for every school; the second is to make provision for the regular inspection of every state school, with clear and straightforward reporting of the results of the inspections being made available to the parents of the children who attend each school.

The overall effect of the Bill will be to give the general public and especially parents far more information than we have been able to contemplate before about the performance of our education system. We are opening up a world that has been closed to the general public for far too long. Once the Bill has come into effect, people will begin to ask why they were never previously able to receive the kind of information about their children's schools which we will now put into people's hands.

The provisions are a direct response to the general public's concern about the standards of education. The Government share that concern to the full, and that is what all our education reforms are about. We want to

improve the standards of education and training for our young people to the levels that the country will require of future generations. The parents charter provisions in the Bill are a key part of that whole effort.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): If the Secretary of State is serious in saying that the proposals are a key part of the Government's educational effort in relation to the United Kingdom, why have primary schools in Scotland been excluded from the legislation?

Mr. Clarke: The Scottish education system has always varied to some extent from the English system, and matters in Scotland are the concern of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Scottish Office selects the aspects of our policy which seem suitable for Scotland.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will press on. What I am about to say gives an idea of the differences of Scottish attitude and of Scottish provisions.

We are just getting the first provisional results of the tests for seven-year-olds, which were carried out in a more widespread way in England than they were in Scotland.

The first of the provisional results, referred to in the various documents whose contents have been discussed in the public press, are now appearing, and more information will be forthcoming. As we discover from those tests the standards of mathematical and reading ability demonstrated by our seven-year-olds, we can have some cause for satisfaction, because a good proportion of children are shown to have been making very good progress.

However, there have already been some expressions of concern about the disappointingly high proportion of children, both in England and Wales, who at that stage were making very little progress with reading in particular. That information is only the tip of the iceberg—more and more will emerge as the Government's reforms come into effect—but it reveals the purpose of our reforms.

The information itself reveals legitimate cause for public concern, and an aspect of children's performance in school that parents are most anxious we should address. That is why we are acquiring the information, and the information reveals exactly why we are embarking on a vigorous process of school reform. The information and evidence of public concern justify, among other things, the considerable effort that I know we are demanding of schools and teachers.

Looking at those provisional results, I cannot help but remember that, only a few months ago, some people, including some hon. Members, were totally against the whole idea of testing seven-year-old children in schools. A campaign run by the teachers union in Scotland achieved considerable success, and fewer seven-year-olds were tested in Scotland than in England. I assume, therefore, that the Scottish public remain shrouded in ignorance to a much greater degree than the English public when it comes to the exact performance of their schools.

There were people in England, too, who claimed that the tests would not tell us anything that we did not already know. The early reaction to the information that is emerging shows that the public did not know exactly what the situation was. Although, personally, I think that the general public felt a certain disquiet and felt a need to know more about the standards being achieved by seven-year-olds in our schools, there were those in the educational world who were more anxious not to test, or to remain silent about the results.

Mr. Salmond: The Secretary of State cannot have it both ways. He cannot refuse to answer a perfectly legitimate question about Scottish education on the grounds that it is a matter for his Scottish colleagues, while at the same time introducing a Bill, which quite disgracefully shoehorns Scottish education into what is basically English and Welsh legislation. Will he reflect, even at this late stage, on the wisdom of referring the single clause relevant to Scotland to a Special Standing Committee of Scottish Members so that it can be properly discussed?

Mr. Clarke: The Bill follows the perfectly ordinary practice of containing United Kingdom legislation, which, for the most part, will apply to all parts of the United Kingdom and also containing a clause that makes express provision for the information that is given in Scotland. That can be addressed as a Scottish issue in Committee in the ordinary way, and I see nothing in the Bill that is remotely out of the ordinary. The generality of the Bill applies to Scotland. The Governmen. are pursuing the same policy north and south of the border but, quite properly, we are taking account of some differences in provision in Scotland, with the result that one clause applies exclusively to Scotland.

Mr. McAllion: The Secretary of State does not seem to understand the terms of his own Bill, which for the most part does not apply to Scotland. The only part of the Bill that applies to Scotland is clause 17. Why cannot the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way to the reasonable request of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that the clause be dealt with separately by Scottish Members, because it affects only Scottish Members, and because no other part of the Bill affects Scottish Members?

Mr. Clarke: The policy of giving information about schools applies in its various ways to different parts of the United Kingdom. There is a clause that gives expression to that in Scotland in a way that matches the provisions of Scottish law and Scottish requirements. It is absurd for Scottish Members to say that they want a separate Committee to discuss one clause of the Bill. I am sure that most Scottish people wish their interests to be represented in debates on the education policy embodied in the Bill, and I am sure that their interests can be represented adequately in that way.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): May I move my right hon. and learned Friend off the local and nationalist difficulty referred to by Scottish Opposition Members? Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the broader point of the premature judgment of the teachers' unions and the Labour party about the tests for seven-year-olds? Surely that proves that we must beware of premature judgments. The Labour party has also jumped to premature conclusions about grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and assisted places and it has condemned them. The Conservative party lends itself to more mature conclusions, to the benefit of the youngsters of this country.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend's intervention is relevant. The consistent theme of Labour's approach to education is that it is opposed to innovation. It is essentially a conservative party with regard to public services. If we had had a Labour Government for the past 10 years, nothing would have changed in our education system. It would have remained entirely a matter for local authorities, acting heavily under the influence of the professional trade unions. Labour would not have introduced any of the innovations that we have been and are considering, including seven-year-old tests.

I have conceded that the first year's seven-year-old tests were imperfect in their details, and I have invited the School Examinations and Assessment Council to come back—as it has—with a much improved version of the tests for next year, which will be more manageable in the classroom and give us more detailed results about the precise level of attainment, particularly in reading, that pupils have reached.

The seven-year-old tests already carried out in England have produced most effective reporting to parents about how well their children are proceeding and have provided much more information for the teachers about how their pupils are proceeding vis-a-vis the national norm. We are beginning to get widespread national information about how our schools are performing, and we will get it county by county.

I have described what have been produced so far as provisional figures. I have made it clear that this year I intend to publish the results of the first year of seven-year-old tests local authority by local authority. I will not in the first instance publish them school by school, because we gave an undertaking that we would not do that in the trial year of the first nationwide seven-year-old tests. However, I see no reason why we should not now give proper figures on a local authority basis.

I was surprised and startled to discover, when I first intended to produce that information, that only 22 local education authorities could give me full information about the seven-year-old test results. That speaks volumes about local authority control of education in this country, particularly many Labour local authorities, which simply are not used to measuring the performance of their schools, let alone producing the results. We wait to discover how many of them will be able to produce the results, how many are bothered to collate the information for their own purposes and how many are capable of transmitting it to me.

I believe that the public are entitled to know the breakdown of the results local authority by local authority. As I have said, this first year's information, which has aroused a lot of legitimate public interest, is only the beginning of what we will produce by way of full information for the general public and parents about how well each part of the system is performing.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My county council has collated information, and it has surveyed all the teachers involved in the seven-year-old tests. This is not a political matter. The county council discovered that the vast majority of the teachers disputed the value of the tests because of the impact of the rising sixes and the wide range and disparity of ages, and also because the tests distracted them for so long from classroom teaching, at the expense of the majority of the children they were supposed to be teaching. The conclusion only confirmed what was known about the children. The value of the exercise was completely undermined by the disruption that the tests brought about.

Mr. Clarke: I concede that the hon. Gentleman's second point has some validity, but it is exaggerated. I accept that the first-year tests undoubtedly took far too much time in many classrooms, and that they sometimes held back the proper teaching of classes. It is for that reason that I asked the chairman of SEAC to review the nature of the tests and to make some changes at SEAC. Practising teachers have been appointed to SEAC. For next year, we have devised a more straightforward system of testing, which will take up less time in the classroom and be more manageable but still produce worthwhile results. There will be better results, because more information will be given by more straightforward testing of such matters as reading ability.

I dispute what the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) said about the test not telling teachers anything that they did not already know. Many teachers assert that, but the evidence of Her Majesty's inspectorate and others clearly contradicts it. The teachers' assessment and the result of the test differed in about a third of cases. As I have said, the public information that is being revealed is new, is of value, is something which the public should have had before, and will help teachers to address the standards that they are achieving in their schools.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment. I must make progress.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe takes me back to the point that I was making. I am astonished to find that, a few months later, there are still people such as himself plainly arguing, "Let us find reasons for not testing the children and for not producing the results; it is not something that the general public should know"—opposing the general principles in the Bill.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On information, is my right hon. and learned Friend willing to comment on reports that the Richmond upon Thames borough council has advised the governing bodies of local schools that they may not legally distribute copies of the parents charter to parents? Is that not absolute nonsense? Is it not monstrous to seek to deprive parents of their right to information on the education of their children?

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) is nodding his head. In our county of Nottinghamshire, the same practice as that in Richmond has been followed. Advice has been given that schools should not distribute the parents charter. I stress that it is only advice. The county councils and borough councils concerned are not entitled to forbid the distribution of that material, which is being distributed only in the way in which successive Governments have distributed material to parents.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel): the behaviour of Richmond upon Thames borough council and that of Nottinghamshire county council shows what Liberal and Labour councils all too frequently believe about exposing

their activities and their performance to the general public. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) plainly agrees that councils should be encouraged to take the view that parents should not be allowed to know the results achieved at their schools, and that they should not be allowed more information about how their children are performing. The parents charter is a threat to the closed bureaucratic world in which the Liberal and Labour parties all too often like to cloak the education authorities that they control.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has been trying to intervene for a long time. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman and then proceed, if I may, for some time before giving way again.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order after we have dealt with this matter.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My point is important. A substantial number of senior figures in Conservative education authorities are not enthusiastic about Government policy. However, does the Secretary of State accept that, although he may be concerned about reading standards in our primary schools, reading standards in primary schools in England today are higher than they were 40 or 50 years ago? Will he therefore make it clear that, if he is to make comments before he has given the matter serious consideration, he will not disregard that important point? The Under-Secretary of State appeared to disagree with me, but I did considerable research on the subject in the 1960s.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order now.

Dame Peggy Fenner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it either proper or in the traditions of the House for a so-called Opposition Front Bench spokesman to make this gesture with his hand while the Secretary of State is speaking?

Mr. Speaker: I did not see that particular piece of body language, but body language is not unknown in this Chamber.

Mr. Clarke: I was touching on the part of the Bill which deals with the production of performance tables which will include, among other things, the results of national curriculum tests, as we steadily develop the national curriculum and the testing system. It is obvious that the production of such information arouses a great deal of controversy and body language among a large part of the Opposition. The hon. Member for Wentworth is right to say that a few senior Conservative councillors are unhappy about it, too. I regret that. On the whole, the attitude of Conservative councillors is more restrained in places such as Richmond, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and many other councils that are controlled by our political opponents.

I make no apology for the fact that performance tables will produce for the general public information about the performance of schools which local authorities were previously deeply reluctant to let out. I invite the House to give a Second Reading to a Bill that will make it legally obligatory to produce information that is useful to the public and parents.

The hon. Member for Wentworth made a second point, about standards of reading. I accept that he has expertise in the matter. He is a former teacher and has always followed education matters. He claims that reading standards are no worse now than 40 years ago. I often follow such debates. As there was a tradition 40 years ago of not providing generally available or comparable national information, it is difficult to come to firm conclusions.

I notice that, every time Her Majesty's inspectorate produces a report about reading standards today, and every time that there is an inquiry into a school, there is widespread public anxiety about reading standards, and a widespread desire to improve them. That is the key point.

We cannot tolerate people leaving our schools illiterate or innumerate in any significant numbers. I do not understand how we are supposed to tackle that if no one will allow us to test children's progress at key stages or if, when we do, there is resistance from local authority bureaucracy or the National Union of Teachers to allowing anyone to know the results of that testing. We are engaged on a key part of the task that faces us all now. That task is to bring levels of literacy and numeracy and, among older children, academic attainment and vocational training up to the level which today's society requires.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I apologise but, having given way at least half a dozen times in five minutes, I said that I would make a little more progress before I gave way again.

Mr. Thornton: On that point, Sir.

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that I shall not be allowed to get off the point entirely for some time.

I cited the seven-year-old tests as the tip of the iceberg. Of course, we shall have the results of national curriculum tests at the ages of seven, 11 and 14. GCSE results are already available to those who get hold of a school's prospectus. Other public examination results, including A-level results, are usually available if one takes the trouble to obtain the prospectus of the school. Equally key information includes truancy figures, staying-on rates for secondary schools and the destination of pupils when they leave schools. Each part of that set of information is essential if we are to know how our system is performing and to give people any effective influence on schools.

Mr. Thornton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: By popular request, I give way to the Chairman of the Select Committee.

Mr. Thornton: Few Members of Parliament, certainly on this side of the House, would dispute the need to give the maximum amount of information to parents by publishing results. However, there are some elements of disquiet, particularly in respect of pupils with special educational needs. This is a point for Committee, but I would like my right hon. Friend to consider it. There can

[Mr. Thornton]

be huge variations in the numbers, even using the Warnock figures. I should like that point to be given some consideration in Committee, to ensure that it is reflected somewhere in a coherent form in the publication of any results from individual schools.

Mr. Clarke: We can certainly tackle that in Committee; my hon. Friend has mentioned the first of many important points. One has to make sensible use of the results and to ask sensible questions about what lies behind them. As I understand it, that is the Opposition's argument. However, if one publishes in tabular form each and every qualification that someone might believe is a necessary addition to the outline results, one is in danger of making all the information completely unmanageable and shrouding it in secrecy simply by making it excessive. I shall return to that subject and to the question of special educational needs.

A few months ago, in the parents charter, we announced that we were going to publish all that information. For years it had been kept secret, and the idea of league tables had been rejected countless times. Almost overnight, we appear to have achieved a widespread public conversion from the Opposition. Although Opposition Back Benchers from Scunthorpe and elsewhere may still be opposed to the whole idea, by and large those on the Opposition Front Bench already lack the nerve to oppose the production of performance tables for schools. The Opposition are criticising them on the basis that all we are proposing is the publication of so called raw data. They have said that there is not enough supporting information to make our proposed tables suitably useful.

We are proposing to publish straightforward, factual, easily obtainable data about each school. I do not accept the view that it will be misused or misunderstood by the public. I do not accept the patronising view that the public and parents do not realise that each school may use perfectly sensible arguments to give the background to its results.

Most members of the public can use straightforward information intelligently. Every time I listen to the comment that the tables will not sufficiently take into account the number of pupils with special educational needs or the different background and circumstances of the population served by a school, I think that the people who make such comments are demonstrating that they are not capable of making intelligent use of that sort of information.

Every member of the public knows that schools' circumstances vary. Once the essential information is published, it is open to everybody concerned to make use of it and to publish it in a local newspaper if they so wish, coupled with sensible comments about the number of pupils, the differences between schools with or without academic selection and the social and economic circumstances of each school. All those matters might properly be regarded as relevant.

Those qualifications are not arguments for not producing the information in the first place. It would be a terrible mistake to allow the inclusion of so many special points of that sort that the league tables would be covered in footnotes or would be a sustained academic thesis, so that very few members of the general public would have the time to read them and digest the information.

Let us trust parents and the public. Most of them can make intelligent use of the straightforward information that they are entitled to.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Does the Secretary of State understand that the crude view that he is adopting is wholly inconsistent with that of his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)? When we discussed the matter in Standing Committee in January 1988, he said that schools' results should be

"published in the context of a report about the work of the school as a whole, including a description of its circumstances and catchment area, and a general statement about the broad effect of socio-economic factors on performance."

Far from patronising parents, that Secretary of State went on to say:

"That will allow for an informed interpretation of assessment results."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee J*, 12 January 1988; c. 425.]

Why is the Secretary of State denying that informed interpretation?

Mr. Clarke: A few months ago, the hon. Gentleman was taking the crude view that no information about a school's performance should be vouchsafed to the general public. It is certainly true that a school can set its own examination results in whatever context seems most sensible when a prospectus is issued, including a general description of circumstances.

We are talking about comparative tables. They are an important innovation proposed by the parents charter. I do not understand how one sets out comparative tables when all the figures are surrounded by full descriptions of the circumstances of each school. Every hon. Member knows the schools and colleges in his or her constituency. They know, just as their constituents will when the information is published, the circumstances of each school. They will make allowances for those matters for which they should properly make allowance. In almost every case, they will be considerably surprised by the comparisons that for the first time will be made in performance in key respects between schools of remarkably similar objectives and background.

Other comments can properly be made, and will be made by sensible local journalists and experts of all kinds. For example, the Audit Commission recently made the valid point that added value—that is Audit Commission language—was a relevant judgment of schools. I accept that.

Mr. Straw: But does the right hon. and learned Gentleman understand it?

Mr. Clarke: I understand it entirely.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): If the Secretary of State can understand it, we can.

Mr. Clarke: There is an interesting conversation going on between new-found enthusiasts on the Opposition Front Bench for giving information to the public.

Let us take this through step by step. With the full information that I have described, one can make valid comparisons between schools. One can see how far children have advanced from where they were when they arrived at where they were when they left. That can be used to compare different schools. One might still have to qualify those judgments with judgments about the social circumstances of the school, whether that school was taking a particularly high proportion of children with

special educational needs, and so on. Nevertheless, it would be a perfectly sensible study. That study can be made now. One can compare GCSE results with A-level results to judge the progress made by sixth forms. No other form of value added comparison is possible. Until the parents charter, adequate information was not likely to be available about schools.

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with analysing the tables in that way. I have no doubt that it will be done by intelligent commentators, such as the Audit Commission, and local newspapers. If it is suggested that the Bill should require the publication of such detailed analyses in the first place—before anything can be published—members of the Audit Commission and Members of Parliament may find the document familiar and accessible, but many parents may first of all prefer to see the actual information on performance and tables.

Mr. Straw: Who is patronising now?

Mr. Clarke: We are not patronising. All I am saying is that, once we produce the material, these judgments can be made. The Labour party is coming reluctantly to the conclusion that these data must be made available, so it will come up with as many complicating amendments as possible to ensure that as few members of the public as possible get access to straightforward information.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall finish my allegations and then give way.

At times Labour Members are guilty of allying themselves with that section of opinion in the educational world that wants to make so many qualifications about results that, in effect, it is trying to prove that there is no such thing as one school being better than another. If one thinks of enough footnotes, qualifications, reasons and explanations, one can demonstrate that there is no difference between one school and another.

The Government's duty is to ensure that straightforward information is published, and that is what the Bill provides. People are entitled to analyse and make use of that information to the best extent they can.

Mr. Straw: Yet again, the Secretary of State has shown that he has not done his homework on this issue or, indeed, on the Opposition's position. Our position during the past month is the same one that we have taken for three years. Again and again, we have argued the need for Ministers and local authorities to concentrate on the value added by schools. If one simply relies on the raw data, and not school effectiveness data, it may show the strength of the pupils at the school, not the strength of the school. It is the Secretary of State who, thank God, is now making a deathbed conversion towards school effectiveness, not us.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has two reactions every time we produce a policy. Usually, he agrees with it rapidly, but sometimes he claims that he thought of it first. However, when one re-reads his previous statements, one finds nothing that resembles the parents charter. If the hon. Gentleman is claiming that, had he been in office, a Labour Government would have taken on the educational world and produced, out of the hands of the local education authorities and the testing system, the information that we will acquire, he is asking us to believe in cloud cuckoo land.

The Labour party has no essential policy on this issue. It would not drive through any of our changes against the interests of the educational world, which is strongly represented in it. Normally, the Opposition tow along until the end and then produce footnote detail to try to distinguish their policy from our own.

As a result of the Bill, a much fuller picture of how our schools are performing will be presented. Some newspapers have already produced data according to what information is available—largely, the A-level results for individual schools. That was interesting, but I did not agree with the way in which some of the newspapers presented those data. However, they were perfectly entitled to analyse the results from what they regarded as the 300 best schools, or as many of those schools as would take part in the project.

I believe that such results are almost the least interesting part of what is eventually produced by a school, not least because the schools on that list do not represent a problem. I do not lie awake at night worrying about the performance of those extremely good schools. Those data related to their performance with high-flying pupils.

When we have the full information as a result of the parents charter and the Bill, the public and the House will discover which state schools offer the worst performance. Wait until we see the recorded truancy rates in some of our more difficult schools. Wait until we see the staying-on rates and how they vary from place to place. We will then discover that we have some problem schools. We will also realise that, until the parents charter, the public were not given any straightforward information about the performance of schools.

A much-repeated criticism about the tables is that, once published, all the parents will want to go to the better schools. Some educationists argue that that is a sinful desire on the part of those parents, which will cause considerable problems for the schools that are not regarded as the better ones. However, that will provide those schools with an incentive to improve their performance.

The argument against the information that will be provided as a result of the Bill and the parents charter is sometimes reduced to one that claims that parents should not be allowed to know such information. Therefore, they will send their children to poorly performing schools without realising that, in key aspects, those schools fall below the level of performance that is attained nationally or in their specific locality.

The performance tables that will be published as a result of the Bill will—I apologise to the House for the jargon—empower parents, particularly from deprived backgrounds, to make more informed choices. They will have real influence over schools, because they will be given the information of which they should never have been deprived for so long.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I believe that the Secretary of State will find that the House is united in trying to give parents the information that will make them more informed in their choice of school. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has rightly referred to the work of the Audit Commission on value-added information. As I understand it, the right hon. and learned Gentleman objected to the publication of such information because it takes longer to compile than the other information that he wants to publish and might therefore hold up the

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

publication of that other information. However, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman seek to have that value-added information published when it is available? He may publish other information first, but will he at least commit himself to ensuring that value-added information is made available as quickly as possible?

Mr. Clarke: That can be worked out. We are producing data that will, for the first time, make it possible for those value-added tables to be produced. I do not want all the data that is required statutorily by the Bill to be produced in such a way that, instead of a few columns and a few heads of information, we have countless columns with countless footnotes. That would make it difficult to tackle all the information.

I am not being patronising when I say that I prefer, when seeing tables of figures, to see first the key tables and graphs, if one is using graphs, on which one intends to base one's decisions. That is far preferable to going through pages of analyses without the key items being highlighted. I have conceded that value added is a perfectly reasonable analysis to make of a school. The Bill will enable the data to be published so that those value-added calculations can be made.

I was intrigued to hear the spokesman for the Liberal Democrats otherwise say that there is no difference between the parties about giving information to parents. Will the hon. Gentleman deal with the problem to which my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham was referring with Richmond borough council? It is one thing for Liberals to sit powerless on the Back Benches of this House expressing their belief in virtue. Will they, in those rare cases where they have control of the local bureaucracy, take steps to ensure that it is put into practice?

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The issue which Richmond and other councils are addressing centres on the fact that the Government passed legislation saying that local authority employees should not distribute information that is politically contentious. The parents charter is unusual in that respect, in that it sets out in red type information which has not been agreed by the House, which is politically contentious and which may not be introduced this side of the next general election. The advice circulated to those local authorities is that the information may infringe the Government's legal restrictions—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will get his officials to clarify the matter.

Mr. Clarke: I join the chorus of "Weasel words" to that intervention. The method of distributing that information has been used by Government for a considerable time and is well precedented. It is not party political information. It has been vetted for that purpose by the processes we have, it has been cleared as suitable information and it is expressed devoid of political bias.

Indeed, the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said that it was not politically contentious. Although he gives that as his opinion, where we have a borough council in which his party is in control, fatuous political arguments are raised for this information not to be distributed to parents. That is because what Liberals say in the House frequently does not accord with what they do when they take power. Liberals in Richmond are as bad as socialists in Nottinghamshire in believing that parents should not be given this information about their schools, information which they prefer to control through their influence in the town hall.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central) *rose*——

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am anxious to move to the next part of the Bill, having given way probably a dozen times.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State has based most of his case on the rights of parents to know information. Will he explain why the report on the future of Her Majesty's inspectorate has not been made available either to parents or the House of Commons? Why did the right hon. and learned Gentleman, this so-called champion of freedom of information, give only one instruction to his civil servants, which was to shred the report?

Mr. Clarke: I am about to come to the next part of the Bill. The review that was carried out was advice from my officials to Ministers. I appreciate that Opposition Members have no ideas of their own, but I do not see why they should have access to advice from my officials to give them some. I have not invented the rule that advice from officials to Ministers is not publicly available. It is time-honoured. If Opposition Members are saying that, should they gain power, they would cause the publication of all written advice given to them by their officials, I shall listen with interest to what would be a novel description of the process of government that they propose to carry out.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) is not rising to his usual standards if that is the best he can do on commenting on the first part of the Bill. It will give parents more information about what matters to them—the performance of their children's schools—than anyone would have contemplated before we published the parents charter.

Mrs. Hicks: Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider publishing details of the resources that go to local authorities? We have found in the past that, when they run out of excuses for giving information to parents, they revert to the excuse of inadequate resources. We have found in many areas, including mine, that some of the worst results often come from the highest-spending authorities.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right. I am surprised that that demand has not been made by some Opposition Members, because they usually blame all shortcomings in the education service on lack of resources. We are now spending 50 per cent. more per pupil than when we came to power. We are also in a year in which standard spending assessments for councils have gone up by 16 per cent., whereas inflation has just gone down to below 4 per cent.

Therefore, not only are more resources going in, but there is no direct correlation between spending and performance. Some of the highest-spending Labour authorities in the country produce some of the worst results in their schools. The parents charter will help to bring that point out and make it more evident. Clearly, we need to spend more money on our children's education—we do so each year—but, as we continually point out, how it is spent and how effectively it is deployed in schools affect the standards attained in those schools, which is

what really matters. The late lamented—or not lamented—ILEA was a classic example of a ludicrously overspending council that produced deplorable results for the pupils in its schools.

The other important provision in the Bill is the inspection proposal, which has the same basic purpose as the performance tables. The Bill will produce a dramatic increase in the number of inspections of schools. For the first time, it will produce open reporting to every parent of the results of the inspection of each school, and direct reporting to parents of the governors' plans, explaining how they intend to build up the strengths and tackle the weaknesses in the school in the light of the inspector's report.

The Bill proposes a system with two levels of school inspection: first, Her Majesty's inspectorate, which will be given more independence of the Government and the Department of Education and Science, as well as a more public voice; secondly, a choice of teams of independent local inspectors who will meet standards set by HMI. That is a huge improvement in public information and quality control of our schools.

In the past, HMI's main role has been to advise the Government on policy, which was the main reason for its inspections. It has tended to produce about 150 public reports a year on individual schools. Indeed, HMI's school-by-school inspection was proceeding at such a slow pace that it would have taken about 200 years before every primary school in the country had had an individual inspection and report. Where HMI produced a report, I have so far found no ordinary, "lay" parent who recalls ever having seen one. Most parents never knew that an HMI report had been produced on their school.

The present system entails local authority inspections and is extremely variable in its effectiveness and coverage. In at least 10 local authorities, it is completely non-existent, because they have no inspection policy. Moreover, local authorities never allow reports on individual schools to be seen by parents. Therefore, the old system, which the Labour party would never have challenged, was seen as inspection by professionals for professionals, with parents left out in the cold.

The Bill sets up a new office of Her Majesty's chief inspector.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I shall give way in a moment, but I wish to make some progress.

Most of the Bill deals with the important statutory functions of Her Majesty's chief inspector and the system that that new office will oversee. In contrast to the Bill, the Education Act 1944 devoted only two subsections to inspection of denominational religious education and one subsection to the appointment of Her Majesty's inspector, who had no function other than to inspect schools at the request of the Secretary of State of the day.

Her Majesty's chief inspector will have increased independence, a formal role and the power to publish as he or she wishes. He will not be detached from decision making and will have a statutory role of offering advice to the Secretary of State. He will advise as he thinks fit, as well as when requested.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has been extremely critical of the new inspectorate's authority, independence and role, because he is obsessed by the numbers employed in HMI. In a wholly typical fashion, the union objects to the reduction in numbers that I am proposing. If the union objects, the hon. Member for Blackburn objects; he makes his judgment based on the number of employees.

The numbers of staff that we shall employ in the new office will be those needed to discharge the duties set out in clause 2. The numbers that I have given publicly hitherto are the best estimate that the senior chief inspector and I can make—about 175 at the end of the transitional period. I have given that estimate before, and the hon. Member for Blackburn is reported to have said on the strength of a newspaper article that we both read:

"the Secretary of State has come close to misleading the House of Commons over the numbers required."

I utterly refute that. I repeat what I have always said: 175 is the best estimate that the senior chief inspector and I could make of the number required after the transitional period to carry out the duties that I have described.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is rising to withdraw that allegation, because it was totally groundless and misleading.

Mr. Straw: The comparison that I made in *The Independent* newspaper was based on what the Secretary of State's own review had recommended as the number required to run the system.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): How does the hon. Gentleman know?

Mr. Straw: The Minister of State asks me how I know. I know from a statement made by the Secretary of State in response to the *Independent* article, a copy of which I have here. The Secretary of State said that the review team had concluded that a maximum of 380 to 390 HMI inspectors would be needed. That was based on certain stated assumptions and the review team's recommended package.

The Secretary of State must explain how the assumptions of the review team differ from the assumptions that he now makes. What did the review team say that the Secretary of State disagrees with?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman made a totally false comparison before he made the totally false allegation that I had misled the House. He had read the article in *The Independent* and my response to it. The figures in the article were not those that I have ever given to the House. My figures were the best estimates that the senior chief inspector and I could make of the numbers required to carry out the policy that I have laid before the House. It is most unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman does not have the courtesy or good sense to withdraw an allegation based on his misreading of a newspaper article.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State made the statement once outside the House. Will he now agree that the figure of 380 was that recommended by the review?

Mr. Clarke: Last week, the hon. Gentleman was trying to be a lawyer and attempting to make me read out on the floor of the House a document that he wanted me to table. The hon. Gentleman has no ideas and is desperate for the advice of my officials. He thinks that he can lure me into making a statement that will have him attempting to give a poor man's reading of "Erskine May" and saying that he wants me to lay the document before the House. I shall not do so.

The figure that the hon. Gentleman is quoting from the newspaper article bears no relation to the figures that I used, which constituted the best estimate that the senior chief inspector and I could give of the numbers required to carry out the policy. The hon. Gentleman had no basis for saying that I misled the House, and he has no basis for declining to withdraw his allegation. He should stop fooling about and making the barrack-room lawyer performances that are starting to creep into his approach to the HMI review.

Two key assumptions lie behind the senior chief inspector and myself arriving at the figure of 175. Responsibility for the inspection of further education and sixth form colleges will transfer to the Further Education Funding Council under a Bill now before another place. I suspect that it will involve largely the same personnel, but they will no longer be on the strength of Her Majesty's inspectorate and will work for the funding council responsible for further education and sixth form colleges.

The senior chief inspector and I have made the best estimate we can of the savings that can be made in the complement of Her Majesty's inspectorate based in local offices and engaged in the inspection of schools in liaison with local education authorities. Many of those activities will be displaced by the substantial increase in the evidence available from 6,000 reports each year by inspectors registered with Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I want to be helpful, although I shall not stand as a referee between the two Front Bench teams. When the figure of 175 was given, was that simply the clause 2 figure for England, or was the clause 5 figure for the Welsh inspectorate also included?

Mr. Clarke: They are English figures. The Welsh inspectorate is not my responsibility. The Secretary of State for Wales will form his own estimate with his own chief inspector.

The inspections will be carried out at local level by independent inspectors who will be registered with Her Majesty's Inspectorate, which will withdraw the registration of inspectors who are not up to standard. That means that inspectors will be supervised and monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate and will not be allowed to carry out inspections unless they are up to standard.

Ms. Gordon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I have given way many times, and I should like to proceed.

The independent teams and Her Majesty's inspectorate will contain some people who are not members of the teaching profession. I make no apology for that. Of course the vast majority of inspectors will have professional qualifications in teaching, but inspectors should not be exclusively drawn from that stable. Many perfectly sensible and intelligent people could be trained to make a contribution to inspection. People would value lay judgment alongside the professional judgment of information about the inspection of a school.

I shall now deal with how that proposed system is being challenged. The issue between the Government and the Opposition—if there is an issue on the Bill—is that the hon. Member for Blackburn advocates a policy of patsy, unquestioning inspections of schools by people who are well known to those schools. The hon. Gentleman accuses me of doing that, but it is his mechanism. My understanding of his proposal is that inspections should be carried out only by local government inspectors.

The hon. Gentleman also takes the view that only local government should be allowed to run schools. Therefore, Labour's policy, as I understand it, is that only local councils should be allowed to run schools and that those schools should be inspected only by local government inspectors. I cannot think of a more patsy, unquestioning system better designed to produce the cosy relationship about which the hon. Gentleman so frequently speaks.

Some head teachers—a minority, I am glad to say—ask why their schools cannot be inspected by inspectors they know. There are even those who ask why they cannot be inspected by those who advise them. That would not be a desirable system. Under the registration of inspectors advocated by the Bill, local government inspection will be universally up to the standard which at the moment only the very best attain.

I am not the only one criticising local government inspection. The Secondary Heads Association shares my view of the system that the Labour party seems to defend. The general secretary of the association, Mr. John Sutton, in a letter to the Prime Minister on 23 September, said:

"That some reform is necessary is not in dispute. Schools are very rarely inspected in depth by HMI and there is a need for a more regular and systematic coverage. LEA inspection has not provided an adequate substitute or back-up for HMI. This is because:

1. They have not been co-ordinated with HMI.
2. The practice and provision has varied very widely across the country.
3. There have been no agreed criteria or standards.
4. The overall calibre of inspectors has been poor.
5. The functions of inspection and advice have been mixed.
6. Inspectors have been able to control elements of expenditure, although LMS will largely stop this.
7. Their procedures have not been seen as being as open and impartial as those of HMI.
8. With individual exceptions, they have lacked the qualities which have been judged praiseworthy in HMI."

Labour's reaction to that is that local authority inspection should be made the universal norm, with local authorities inspecting the schools which only they are allowed to run. I cannot think of a recipe for diminution of standards that is more likely to succeed.

The association and others criticise what I describe as independent inspectors, but we can reassure them in the Bill and elsewhere by showing how powerful HMI will be in ensuring that standards are up to the required level. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) on the Opposition Front Bench agrees with such systematic inspection, but if she does, the Labour party is instantly converted to such inspection and reports to parents.

There are choices. The choices are either that local——

Mr. Straw: We have already proposed that.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman must have proposed it so sotto voce that neither I nor any member of the public has heard his proposal. His method of expressing himself often has its imperfections. Ever since I produced my proposals about three months ago, I have thought that he was opposing them. It is absurd, every time we introduce another element of our policy, for him to leap on to the populist pitch and then, as he no doubt will in a few minutes' time, find some detailed reasons for being opposed to it.

If there is to be local inspection of 6,000 schools a year, there are several choices. The first is to have it done by local government. The second is to increase the establishment of HMI so that it employs thousands of people, but I do not believe that a centralised civil service approach is desirable. The third is the one that we are providing—giving the governors of schools the choice of teams of inspectors, who will be up to the standards required by HMI at the centre.

The most important product of this will be the reports to the parents. They will get from the inspectors straightforward summaries saying what the strengths and weaknesses of each school are. They will then get the governors' action plans, which will be the results of all this.

When I say that parents will receive this information, I must make it clear that it will not be available on application to those parents who realise that they can obtain it. It will be sent unsolicited to all parents, so that there will be a great increase in the information available to them about the school.

Teachers will be praised for their achievements and be given incentives and guidance to improve their performance. We will build up pride in individual schools on the back of the influence of parents in what those schools are doing. The Bill will allow for reports, comparative tables and inspectors' reports. It will increase, as all our policies do, parental influence and parental choice in education on a scale on which we have never previously embarked in state education.

I disregard Labour's attempts to agree with part of this. As I have said before, I do not believe that a Labour Government would have embarked on any of this. They would not have challenged any of the interest groups that wish to maintain the status quo. The Bill will let light into the education world. Given the reaction that we are getting, it is probably not for us to defend our policy—it is more for the Opposition to tell us how darkness, secrecy and the protection of a closed professional world will serve the public good in education.

I commend the Bill to the House.

4.37 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We have listened to the Secretary of State speak for an hour and a minute, and during those 61 minutes never once did he utter a word about the central feature of the Bill—the doctrinaire destruction of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools and the privatisation of the national and local schools inspectorates.

The Conservative party has no mandate for the Bill, which will undermine standards in schools, demoralise the teaching profession and, through the privatisation of the schools inspectorate, deny parents independent information about the education of their children. It will prevent the taking of prompt action to improve failing schools.

In three successive general election campaigns, the Conservative party has promised higher standards in education. After 12½ years of Tory government, anxiety about standards in schools has never been greater. Britain lags behind its competitors in every measure and is bottom of the league table. For four years running, the Government's teachers' pay committee has reported that teachers' morale has never been lower. Investment in education as a share of national wealth has slumped. Parents are being forced to pay more and more out of their own pockets for their children's education.

What is the Secretary of State's response to the overwhelming lack of public confidence shown in every test of public opinion about the Government's education policy and his stewardship of it? It is not to change the policy or feel some humility about 12 years of failure. Instead, it is to send for the advertising man to produce yet another glossy pamphlet—this time, a parents charter which is allegedly embodied in the Bill.

There is nothing new in the idea of a parents charter. It is a device which Conservative central office has used twice before when it was in a hole with its education policy. The spokesman for the Opposition, the then Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas, had one in 1974. The then Secretary of State, Mr. Mark Carlisle, had another in 1980, but both sank without trace.

The idea of a parents charter is not new; what is new is the brazenness with which the Government play fast and loose, spending taxpayers' money on party political propaganda. While teachers are underpaid, schools are crying out for repair and children for books, Ministers' standard answer is to say, "You can't solve problems by throwing money at them." However, when it comes to the central problem faced by the Secretary of State and his colleagues—that of being re-elected—their only solution is to throw money at it, providing that it is not their money or that of their supporters but taxpayers' money.

Although the share of national wealth invested in education as a whole has gone down, taxpayer spending on publicity by the Department of Education and Science has risen in real terms since 1979 by no less than 28 times. This year's spending of £6·5 million is four and a half times the level of two years ago. The parents charter does not merely inform people of the rights that they already have and which are approved by Parliament, but contains a list of proposals on the privatisation of the inspectorate. They are highly controversial and cannot come into force until after the next election, even if the Bill is passed, and then only in the unlikely event of the Conservatives' being returned. In other words, it is a manifesto; the use of taxpayers' money for such propaganda is an utter disgrace and the Secretary of State knows it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I had not intended to intervene so early, because I gave way several times and we need to make progress. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the figure he quoted for our publicity budget is largely a combination of our staff recruiting campaigns, coupled with increased publishing and printing costs since 1979? If he is attacking the parents charter for being party political —although in his interventions he appeared to claim that he had thought of it first—does he accept that it does not mention privatisation? If he is claiming that it does, what existing public body is he claiming that we intend to put into the private sector, either in the Bill or in the leaflet to which he objects?

Mr. Straw: The document explains about the Government's proposals.

Mr. Clarke: Privatisation?

Mr. Straw: Of course, in terribly careful language because the last word that the Secretary of State wishes to utter is "privatisation". These days, it never falls from his mouth, but even *The Daily Telegraph* used the word about the proposals. As I shall show, the Secretary of State is privatising the work of Her Majesty's inspectorate and of the local schools inspectorate. As he knows, the leaflet contains weasel words about how the new system of inspection of schools will work. The document is not even an accurate representation of the Bill, so it is not an accurate manifesto of what would happen to schools and to parents' rights if the Tories were to be re-elected. Therefore, the Government can be charged on two accounts—first, of spending money on a manifesto and, secondly, of issuing a manifesto that is wholly inaccurate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is talking passionately, but he was in the middle of a denunciation of my spending money on political leaflets advocating privatisation. Where are the political words in the leaflet to which he objects and, in particular, which public body does the leaflet say that we shall privatise or transfer to the private sector?

Mr. Straw: I have dealt with exactly that point. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes. Every newspaper understands that the Secretary of State does not wish to admit that he is privatising the schools inspectorate, which is precisely what he is doing. He knows that, and he also knows that the privatisation of public services—of which he was the architect in the health service—is very unpopular with the public. He does not wish to admit the consequences of his actions.

There is no way in which anyone considering the fantastic increase in expenditure on publicity and on public relations in the past two years can come to any other conclusion than that the Government—as in 1987 and in 1983—are spending taxpayers' money on party political propaganda in a desperate attempt to be re-elected.

We cannot judge exactly what educational standards are today because of the Government's inadequate monitoring of those standards. In each manifesto since 1979, the Government have promised higher standards. In 1979, they said:

> "We shall promote higher standards of achievement in basic skills. The Government's Assessment of Performance Unit will set national standards in reading, writing and arithmetic, monitored by tests worked out with teachers and others and applied locally by education authorities."

That was what the Conservatives said in 1979, but they did absolutely nothing to implement that manifesto between 1979-83 or 1983-87. They said that the assessment of performance unit would set national standards and would monitor them. Shall I tell the House what they have done with that unit? In 1989, they abolished it. As a consequence, as the Secretary of State's predecessor told the House on 25 July 1990, no national data about standards of reading at seven currently exist. The Labour Government monitored reading standards. The Conservative Government started to do so, but then abandoned the process.

Educational standards could and should be higher. There is too great a variation in the performance of otherwise similar schools with similar teachers and similar resources serving similar areas and similar children. If standards in each school are to be raised, we need a better flow of information about the performance of schools, improved systems of inspection and better means by which action can swiftly be taken when a school is falling down on its job.

The Secretary of State tried to make great play of the suggestion that we had caught up with him. I wish that he had bothered to prepare properly for the debate and had bothered at least to find out what the Labour party's policy was. At the moment, in order to attack us, he must invent our policy and our record. For the past three years, we have published documents about the need to improve standards of inspection and the monitoring of standards. In June this year, well before his conclusions were announced about the review of the inspectorate, we published a document called "Raising the Standard" on which we had worked and consulted for 18 months.

That document—of which I know the Secretary of State has received a copy—states that, drawing on the experience of the Audit Commission, of which the Secretary of State approved in other respects, we would establish a tough and independent education standards commission which would take over the inspectorial work and staff of Her Majesty's inspectorate, and would lead and co-ordinate the work of local authority inspectors.

We have also read and digested the Audit Commission's report on the variability in the work of local inspectors, and we believe that it is too variable and must be reformed. HMI would be held more at arm's length from Ministers because we believe that its role as impartial monitor of the system is compromised by its other current role as private adviser to the same Ministers. Local authorities would have a clear duty to inspect and monitor schools in their areas and to publish comparative data on the performance of schools.

The Secretary of State drew attention to the curious wording of section 77 of the Education Act 1944, which deals with inspection by local authorities. In spite of the Government's claims to be concerned about inspection, they have not during the past 12 years—despite the opportunities provided by three major education Bills—bothered to try to change the current statutory basis of inspection until now.

Under our plans, local authority inspectors would be constitutionally separate from other local authority functions. Local authorities themselves would be inspected by the education standards commission. The Bill contains no such proposal. Parents and governing bodies would get new rights of complaint to the education standards commission and, in certain circumstances, they could force action by the commission in relation to a local education authority and to a school governing body.

Under our proposals, schools would receive a full inspection at least once every five years, but regular monitoring by a team of properly qualified inspectors working in all schools in an area and under the supervision of the education standards commission would provide a flow of information on a consistent basis to schools, to teachers, to parents, to local authorities, to the Department of Education and Science and to Parliament.

Our proposals were carefully worked out over a three-year period and have been widely welcomed, not

least by parents and by governors' associations, and by the Secondary Heads Association, which has excoriated the privatising of the schools inspectorate. In contrast, the near-universal condemnation of the plans of the Secretary of State has been overwhelming.

Under the Bill, the inspectorates at national and local level are to be privatised, but only the heads of the private commercial inspection firms will need to be registered with the rump of Her Majesty's inspectorate which remains. The requirement for training of the rest is lax and cannot be implemented unless the training itself is privatised. The only requirement in the Bill about the qualities needed for inspectors is that at least one in any team should be wholly ignorant of education and of schools. The only qualification laid down in the Bill is no qualification at all.

The system is untried and untested. None of the countries with which our education system is adversely compared—France, Germany, Japan and Korea—has privatised its inspectorate or is even contemplating it.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Japan?

Mr. Straw: Japan as well.

The scheme is irresponsible beyond belief. None of the claims of the Secretary of State for the new, privatised inspectorate stands up to examination. He says that the inspectorate will be strengthened and all-powerful; in fact it will be severely weakened. He says that it will be independent of Government. It will not be; it will be a creature of Government. He says that handing over school inspection to commercial inspectors will help to raise standards. In fact, it will make the establishment of any consistent standard of inspecting, with the consequent raising of standards, well nigh impossible.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that of the countries with which he made comparison, Japan and Korea, which he appears to extol, do not have a system of inspection as far as I am aware, so can hardly be described as having the Government type of inspection which he proposes?

I remember the hon. Gentleman's old proposal about the standards commission. Is it not the case that, under his proposals, inspection would be carried out only by employees of the Government or of local government—overwhelmingly by local government, which will manage the schools—and that Her Majesty's inspectorate, far from being made more powerful, would be placed under the control of a quango appointed by the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State is wrong on the latter point and wholly misunderstands the former. The education standards commission would be nominated by the Secretary of State, but the nomination would be subject to the endorsement of the all-party Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, and the commission itself would appoint the chief officer. If the Secretary of State is serious about guaranteeing the independence of the senior chief inspector, he should adopt that process rather than his proposal, under which he will, in practice, appoint the senior chief inspector.

The Secretary of State is wrong to suggest that only the local authority inspectors would inspect schools, but he is right to say that the inspectors would be public service employees. We do not believe that the inspection of school systems should be handed over to private companies, any more than we believe that the police, the armed forces or the national health service should be privatised. We believe that some things can be dealt with by the private sector, but that public services and the regulation of public services should be maintained within the public sector. Even this Secretary of State adopted that position in respect of the regulation of other public services for which he has been responsible.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Gentleman will recall that, during his time with the Inner London education authority, the authority appointed a number of people from outside teaching to be heads of schools, notably Margaret Miles. Those people did remarkably well. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is not feasible to appoint people from outside teaching or people who have not been associated with education to inspect schools, as the Secretary of State proposes?

Mr. Straw: With the inspection of classroom practice and what goes on in schools generally, it is not possible for outside observers who have no educational experience to do the job. I visit at least a school a week. The Secretary of State has managed to visit three primary schools in a year, so he will have picked up something of what I am about to say.

I try to develop as much expertise as I can about what is going on in schools, but I have never taught. It would not be sensible to have a lay person such as myself judging what goes on inside a school. One reason why Her Majesty's inspectorate is held in high esteem is that the inspectors have had experience of classroom practice. They are or have been good pedagogues and, as a head teacher said to me yesterday, when an HMI comes inside a school, one knows that one cannot pull the wool over his eyes. If a lay person came in, it would be easy to do so.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am genuinely trying to clarify the principle on which the hon. Gentleman stands. No one is talking about privatising the education service, the health service, the police or the armed forces, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman concedes. To cut through his language, is the great principle on which he stands that those who inspect on behalf of the customers of the service should be employed by the people who provide the service for each and every case in the public services?

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has described the principle with which I disagree. I believe strongly, as I shall show, that the regulator of the services should be separate from the provider. One of the central objections to right hon. and learned Gentleman's plan is that the provider becomes a regulator.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): They will be employed by them.

Mr. Straw: As is his wont, the Under-Secretary of State is muttering from a sedentary position. The inspectors will receive their pay cheques from the local authority, but, like environmental health officers, their statutory duties will place them at arm's length from the rest of the local authority. The Secretary of State cannot make a joke of that. The truth is that HMI will continue to be paid by the Crown. The judiciary are paid by the Crown, but that does not mean that they are creatures of politicians. What

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matters is the constitutional relationship between those individuals and the service that they regulate, not the source of their pay cheques.

Mr. Oppenheim: What about Japan?

Mr. Straw: My understanding, based on better briefing than that of the Secretary of State, is that there are inspectorates in Japan and in Korea. It is no good the Secretary of State looking to the Box for information. Both those countries have public service inspectorates.

The claim by the Secretary of State to be strengthening the power of the inspectorate is laughable. The inspectorate is to be cut to one third of its present size. Many inspectors with years of experience are to be made redundant. Her Majesty's inspectorate will be reduced to a rump which is quite incapable of meeting the tasks imposed on it. That is not just my view, but the view of those who know a little more about the task of inspection —Her Majesty's inspectors themselves. Their association, the First Division Association, said that, far from HMI being made "more powerful and independent", it

"will be severely weakened and damaged".

We know that the secret review of HMI concluded not that 175 inspectors would be needed for the inspectorate's new role, but that at least 380 or 390 would be needed. The Secretary of State wriggled about those figures. He was desperate to avoid mentioning them, for fear that he would then have to produce the review. He knows that the review said that 380 to 390 inspectors were needed. To paraphrase the review, he also failed to explain the difference between the assumptions on which he based his policy and those made in the review.

We know that the 175 inspectors will not be able to do the job that is expected of them. A breakdown of the figures in documents sent to me shows that just 43 inspectors will be involved in the inspection of schools and of educational issues. Just 39 inspectors will be engaged in supervising the army of private commercial inspectors who will have to be registered, trained, monitored and assessed, and who will then have to log their reports. On those figures, there will be just one HMI to cover the 190 school inspections that will take place in any one year in the county of Kent.

It is ludicrous to expect anyone to believe that those 175 inspectors could conceivably monitor the system over which they are supposed to have control. The fact that the task will overwhelm those 175 inspectors is confirmed by schedule 1, paragraph 2 of which states that the senior chief inspector has powers to bring in private, outside, commercial consultants, called "additional inspectors". Scores of such private consultants will have to be brought in to do work currently carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate if the Bill's scheme is to have the remotest chance of success. Yet the Secretary of State claims that he is not privatising the inspectorate.

The second claim made by the Secretary of State is that the new inspectorate will be more powerful than the one that it replaces. The independence of any institution depends partly on its explicit power and partly on the information and knowledge at its disposal. As an institution, Her Majesty's inspectorate is to be broken up. But its intellectual foundation is also to be demolished. The respect and authority of Her Majesty's inspectorate has been based upon the cohesion, dedication and skill of a single group of men and women and on their day-to-day contact with colleagues from the local authority inspectorate. All that is to go, to be replaced by a fragmented, privatised inspection system.

Aside from its formal inspections, Her Majesty's inspectorate typically visits or inspects 6,000 schools in the course of the year. Local authority inspectors visit and inspect thousands more. Under the proposals of the Secretary of State, total inspection is likely to be less than it is today. Policy issues may not be studied at all and activities such as youth and community work seem to have been forgotten altogether.

At one moment, the Secretary of State showers the inspectorate with hollow compliments, but, when he departs from his script, his true feelings and contempt for the inspectorate become all too clear. This afternoon, he sneered at the way in which, given the ordinary cycle of inspections, it would take 200 years to get through all the schools in the country.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is true.

Mr. Straw: We agree that the system ought to be reformed, but to suggest that that is all the work that Her Majesty's inspectorate does is to parody the position, and that was what the Secretary of State sought to imply. On "News at Ten" the Secretary of State sneered at unnamed teachers who felt that inspectors were people who could not teach. On 4 November, the right hon. and learned Gentleman told the House that his objection to the local authorities inspection service was that the inspectors were "ex-teachers".

The Secretary of State has no reason to feel warmly towards the inspectorate. It has damned the city technology colleges programme and criticised the Conservatives' education policy, pointing out that, after 12 years, one in three children gets a raw deal and that 20 per cent. have unsatisfactory reading teaching. It is incredible that the Secretary of State should now expect us to believe that he wants to make the inspectorate more powerful and independent so that it can be even more critical in its conclusions about Government policy.

In any event, the Bill gives the lie to the Secretary of State's claim. Three key lines in the Bill make the senior chief inspector wholly subordinate to the Secretary of State and the Government of the day. Clause 2(5) states:

"In exercising his functions the Chief Inspector for England shall have regard to such aspects of government policy as the Secretary of State may direct."

The Secretary of State is a lawyer. He knows very well that, when an Act directs that someone shall have regard to something, that amounts to a clear direction of that individual.

Under our proposals, as I have already told the Secretary of State, the independence of the inspectorate will be guaranteed, membership of the education standards commission will be subject to endorsement by the Select Committee, and the commission, and the senior officer, will report to Parliament not to Ministers.

The independence and power of HMI will be undermined by the central proposal of the Bill that, in future, school governing bodies alone will pick, choose and pay their own inspectors. That proposal is based on a profound misconception of whom inspectors should be serving. Schools are public institutions, paid by the public

to serve a public purpose. The public's responsibility is to the children in each school and their parents, but also to the wider community and the national interest.

The public interests of the consumers of the service are potentially in conflict with those of the providers of the service—the teachers, head teachers and governors of any school. Governors now play a significant role in determining a school's policy and administration. The head should rightly be the most influential member of the governing body and should enjoy the closest relationship with his or her chair of governors. The governors are in no sense at arm's length from the school; in many circumstances they are the school.

In every other aspect of public life, without exception, the Government have recognised that public institutions must be regulated on behalf of the consumers, and that those regulators must be wholly at arm's length from the providers. If Ministers had come here to propose that British Telecom and Mercury could pick and choose their own regulators, there would have been a public outcry. If restaurants were suddenly allowed to pick and choose their own environmental health officers, public confidence in food inspection would plummet. If Ministers came to the House saying that they wished to encourage competition between one set of regulators and another, the country would rightly believe that they had taken leave of their senses. Yet that is exactly what is proposed in the Bill, which imports into school inspection the worst aspects of private auditing of public companies. It is the BCCI solution to the regulation of public bodies.

The Tory party claims to understand human nature, but the Bill shows remarkable ignorance of it. Allowing schools to pick and choose and pay their own inspectorate may gratuitously damage the good reputation of fine head teachers and allow underperforming heads to escape effective scrutiny. Under the Bill, schools must seek at least two tenders from different firms of private inspectors. In practice, the choice will most be influenced by the head and the chair of the governing body. On what basis will they select from those tenders? They will pick partly on price, but they will also pick the firm most sympathetic to their approach. A headmistress told me last week, "The moment that any private inspectors give us a bad report, they will not be reappointed the next time."

The ludicrous idea embodied in the Bill is, moreover, inconsistent with the stand that the Secretary of State has taken on the regulation of public services. Until the early 1980s, local authorities could pick, choose and pay for their own auditors. In 1982, a Bill was introduced to require that, in future, each local authority auditor was chosen not by the local authority but by the Audit Commission. In commending that to the House, the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

> "It is the essence of the audit function that the auditor should be, and be seen to be, independent . . . because local authorities appoint their own auditors, audit is not seen to be obviously independent of local government."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1982; Vol. 16, c. 53.]

What is the difference between the appointment by the Audit Commission of local authority auditors and the need for the educational auditors of schools to be externally appointed by bodies external to the schools? The Secretary of State voted for that Bill.

Another example is the position of the NHS opt-out trust hospitals. Few institutions are now so detached from the public service. We have been told time and again how crucial is their autonomy. As Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. and learned Gentleman had the choice of allowing trust hospitals to pick and pay their own auditors or of ensuring that that choice was made for them. He chose the latter course. By his decision, it is not the trusts but the Audit Commission that appoints auditors to NHS trust hospitals because of the self-same need for auditors to be, and to be seen to be, independent. I simply do not understand how, having adopted that position in respect of the appointment of local authorities and trust hospitals, the Secretary of State should now be wriggling to suggest that schools should pick and choose their own regulators.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At times, the hon. Gentleman seems to come dangerously near to agreeing with my principles. The aim of looking after the customer, as compared with the provider, sounds very commendable, but I do not understand how any of that squares with the hon. Gentleman's proposal that local government should be the only inspector of the schools it runs. The hon. Gentleman is taking away all choice and saying that only local government should provide inspections.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has already received one copy of "Raising the Standard". I shall send him another, which he can use as bedtime reading. He parodies our proposals. What we propose is the establishment of an independent commission, answerable to Parliament and with membership approved by Parliament, to run HMI and supervise the local authorities inspectorate, which itself runs at arm's length from the local authorities, by virtue of constitutional position and legislative power. Local authority inspectors and HMI, which are at arm's length from the schools these days, inspect the schools, but the local authorities are to be inspected by the education standards commission.

It does not lie well in the Secretary of State's mouth for him to complain about local authorities. His scheme for schools to pick and choose their own inspectors is so defective that in the body of the Bill he must make local authorities the inspectors of last resort. He acknowledges that, in the end, the responsibility may have to fall to the local authority when the privatised system fails.

The history of this is clear. Provided that the legislative framework is clear—as it is with social services inspectors and environmental health officers—there is no reason why local authorities should not be able to operate at arm's length. They are not inspecting themselves; they are inspecting schools. In addition, the education standards commission would inspect the local authorities.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): How can the hon. Gentleman square that? Earlier he admitted that the inspectorate would be paid by the local authority that runs the schools. He who pays the piper calls the tune. That must be perfectly logical. It is not an arm's-length operation. The hon. Gentleman is saying that the inspectorate will inspect schools in which the heads and other staff are paid by the local education authority.

Mr. Straw: The chief constable receives his pay cheque from the local authority, but that does not make him the creature of the police committee or the local authority, because his powers are clearly laid down in statute to guarantee him his independence. The Lord Chief Justice receives his pay cheque from the same computer as the Secretary of State, but that does not make him the

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Secretary of State's creature. The structure and the powers for inspections are crucial. It is no good the Secretary of State trying to dodge our proposals. His proposals are fundamentally defective, because the schools that are being inspected will be allowed to pick, choose and pay their own inspectors from the ranks of private inspectors.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I will not, because the hon. Gentleman has just entered the Chamber.

One of Labour's criticisms of the present system is the inadequacy of follow-through action. Failing schools might be identified, but even when that happens, action to improve the situation has not always occurred. Labour's proposals deal directly with that problem by ensuring that each local inspectorate agrees in advance with the education standards commission management strategies for intervention so that there is a flow of information between inspections to provide early warning of failings.

The Bill will make follow-through and regular monitoring far more difficult, but the Secretary of State did not refer to that. Local inspectorates as we know them are to be destroyed. Local authority inspectorates that remain will operate as commercial undertakings. According to clause 15(4), the service must be entirely self-financing. The local authorities' general power to inspect is to be removed altogether.

When a school is found to be failing, who will intervene? If that failure is shown up in four-yearly inspections, the responsibility lies with the governors who must produce an action plan. That is an inappropriate task to load entirely onto the shoulders of governors. As the National Association of Governors and Managers has stressed, that ignores the nature of school governors as lay people with limited time and the fact that in most cases the failures identified will be those of the head and his or her senior management team whom amateurs on a governing body will find it extremely difficult to hold to account.

Problems in a school do not conveniently coincide with the one week in four years of a formal inspection. Nor may they be evident from the school's crude performance data. What if a head falls ill and major management problems develop as a consequence some months after the formal report?

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Straw: I will happily give way to any hon. Member who has taken part in this debate, but the hon. Gentleman has just walked into the Chamber.

Dr. Hampson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman should retract that remark. In the past 15 minutes, I have listened to all he had to say about the local inspectorate and I simply wanted to make a relevant point about that. It is quite out of order for him to accuse me of not listening to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor.

Mr. Straw: As I was saying, who then is under a duty to monitor the school's performance and intervene to ensure that it returns to an even keel? According to the Government's scheme, the answer is, no one. The senior chief inspector will not, in general, know of such problems. Even when he does, he will not have the staff to intervene. The local authority's inspectorate will have no power to intervene off its own bat. There will instead be a great black hole. Standards of education will have been sacrificed in favour of the Bill's bizarre dogma.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): The hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that he would appoint an education commission at the centre which would comprise members appointed by the Secretary of State. It would liaise with local education authority inspectors to discuss strategies for development and improvement. However, if the policy was introduced, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would be Secretary of State—something which will not happen and I gave up fantasies a long time ago——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Why intervene, then?

Mr. Dunn: To put a sock in your mouth. Mind you, it would have to be a very big sock.

A Labour Secretary of State would appoint the membership of the commission which would deal with local authority inspectors appointed by Labour councils. I am not implying that all that is wrong: it may well be right. However, there may be collusion and conspiracy to cover up, as occurred over William Tyndall school 10 years ago, a case that has been vividly etched in my mind. Is there not a fundamental weakness in the hon. Gentleman's policy?

Mr. Straw: I will send the hon. Gentleman a signed copy of our document, and when he reads it he will be reassured. We accept that the current system for inspecting and monitoring schools must be reformed. We have been saying that for far longer than the Government have said it. I accept that local authority inspectors must be placed at arm's length from the rest of the local education authority. We are absolutely clear about that. Those inspectors must be supervised by an independent commission and that is what we are proposing.

That is a great deal more coherent than the Secretary of State's proposal, but it is not too different from the proposal in the 10-minute Bill moved by the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). There were other defects, but it proposed that the Audit Commission should run the inspectors, and that is more coherent than the Secretary of State's proposal today.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I want to move the hon. Gentleman away from the constitutional position of his proposals and from the Government's proposals. The prime weakness of the present inspection process is that while the HMI can inspect a school, it is completely powerless to act if it finds bad teaching practice. I have heard nothing in the Opposition's proposals which would remedy that problem.

Mr. Straw: I agree that that is one of the major defects of the current system. With respect to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), there is far more in our proposals than there is in the Secretary of State's, although perhaps the hon. Gentleman could not hear what I was saying because of the noise created by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson).

I explained that, under our proposals, each local education authority would have to agree and have validated by the education standards commission

management systems for intervening when a school was found to be failing. There are two problems at the moment. First, there is no proper system of inspection. It is haphazard and varies from local authority to local authority. Some do it well, while others do not do it at all.

The second problem is that, where a school's problems are identified, action does not automatically follow to remedy them. We have thought about this matter a great deal. We have said that every local authority must have in place—not after the event, but before the event—strategies for intervention which will include putting people into a school or perhaps terminating people's employment. Those points must be agreed in advance with the education standards commission.

The problem with the Government's proposals is that, if problems are thrown up during the inspection, the governors must produce an action plan. I believe that it is wrong to put the duty to take action on the governors, because often the problem will be the head, the deputy or the senior management of the school. It is unreasonable to expect lay people to take action against them without any support. If problems occur at any other time than at the formal inspection, in the Secretary of State's system no one will have any duty—few will have power—properly to intervene.

There is another difference between the Secretary of State's system and ours. Under our system, the governing body or parents can, in certain circumstances, require the education standards commission to intervene over the heads of the local authority or school governing body. There is no proposal in the Bill to give parents real rights where they are willing to enter into such a situation to get effective intervention by the inspectorate.

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I shall not give way. I need to press on. Because of the restrictions that the Secretary of State seems intent on imposing on the information that local authorities and inspectors will be able to collect and disseminate to parents, the monitoring of schools will be inadequate. Although the Secretary of State spent 50 minutes talking about the issuing of information, the only clause about information in England is clause 16. It is a regulation-making clause devoid of a specific requirement, and we shall examine it in detail in Committee.

We in the Labour party have long had an overwhelming commitment to freedom of information, and our policy review and policy statements have made that clear year after year. Because of that, as a matter of open government and of parents' rights, the Labour party is committed to making available aggregate information about a school's examination results, provided that its reliability is clear.

We have specific and serious objections, which used to be shared by Ministers, about the publication of test data school by school on seven-year-olds—another matter which we shall examine in Committee. The idea that the Secretary of State was peddling again this afternoon, that the effectiveness of schools can be judged solely on the basis of crude league tables, is simply ludicrous. It is as daft as choosing a motor car on the basis of its claimed maximum speed.

The Secretary of State's position is inconsistent with that of his predecessor. If the Secretary of State bothered to read the debates in Standing Committee in January 1988, he would notice that our view is the same as we took then. In his own evidence to the schoolteachers' pay and review body, the Secretary of State issued a caution about the use to which crude league tables should be put. At paragraph 56, he said that league tables were

"admittedly rather elementary performance measures and they should not be the sole determinant of discretionary pay."

If those tables are unreliable even to judge such a discrete issue as heads' pay, how much less reliable are they to judge the overall performance of a school?

I do not understand what the Secretary of State is scared about in providing additional information to parents and governors, as we propose. It is not we who are patronising parents, it is the Secretary of State. If, after all this time, he has been converted to the issue of school effectiveness, I congratulate him. We now need to see some Government investment and leadership on how local authorities and school governing bodies can best provide information on and do research into the effectiveness of schools, into their creation of value added, so that that information can be given to parents and governors alongside the crude raw data.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): If comprehensive education has been such a success, as claimed by the Labour party, why do I receive day by day from senior and highly paid civil servants, doctors and teachers totally illiterate, misspelt and unpunctuated letters?

Mr. Straw: Almost all those letters would have been from privately educated people.

Few measures such as this Bill have been pulled together in such a disgraceful manner. The review—the secret review—was rushed through in two months. Public consultation on it has been a travesty. It did not begin until 2 October, after firm proposals were announced by the Secretary of State, and did not end until 15 November, after the Bill had been published.

This evening, I shall move that the Bill be referred to a Special Standing Committee. That procedure enables there to be a Select Committee hearing to examine the consequences of a Bill before its line-by-line examination. That procedure was used by the Government in respect of the Education Act 1980, which implemented the Warnock committee's report on special needs. It is the only chance of ensuring that the full consequences of the privatisation of the inspectorate are made known before the Bill is railroaded through the House and its damage becomes irreparable.

Underlying the specific gratuitous harm that is done by the Bill's proposals is the profoundly flawed, one-dimensional doctrine of the right wing of the Tory party which has turned competition into a totem. It is an approach which means, as Cardinal Hulme so tellingly put it, that

"some schools will benefit at the expense of others, some pupils favoured while others are neglected."

Like the cardinal and, indeed, Archbishop Carey, we believe in a different ethic. We believe in an education system in which every child is stretched to fulfil his or her potential, but in which he or she is taught that the happiness and success of society and its institutions depend not on self-destructive competition but on co-operation and community.

The Bill is based upon the Government's so-called parents charter, but what parents want and need are real rights for themselves and for their children. They want the

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right to form home-school associations in every school. They want good information about the effectiveness of their children's schools. They want the certainty of a tough and truly independent national and local school inspection. They want the right to call in the inspectors when they are needed, not once in four years. Parents want the right to a free education for their children and an end to the millions that they are forced to shell out in donations to pay for basic essentials.

Parents want the right to have their children educated in schools with roofs that do not leak and walls that have recently been painted. Above all, they want their children taught by teachers who are qualified in the subjects that they are teaching and who are valued and held in high esteem by the rest of society. They want all that, but they have had none of it from the Government. Parents want an end to the failures of the past 12 years. They want an end to contemptuous gimmicks such as those in the Bill. Parents want an end to this Government. They want a Labour Government who are committed to the education service and are ready to invest in it. We shall oppose the Bill.

5.26 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Like many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I am not persuaded by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that the local education authority's inspectorate will be independent of the LEA. As the hon. Gentleman says, the LEA pays the wages and I have not the slightest doubt that the inspectorate will often consist of former colleagues of the head teachers of the very schools that are being inspected. It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman does not have the courtesy to listen as we listened to him. The LEA inspectorate will be a blue-eyed inspectorate, and nothing more.

I welcome this Bill, the latest in a battery of measures designed to improve the quality and standard of the state education system in which the majority of the nation's children are educated. We are already beginning to see the benefits of earlier measures—for example, local management of schools, the national curriculum and grant-maintained schools—which are widely recognised as a major success. We look forward to many more applications for grant-maintained status when we win the next general election.

It is an unfortunate commentary on some LEAs that so many head teachers, governors and staff are not willing for their schools to apply for grant-maintained status. They are concerned that if, God forbid, Labour Members are elected to government, head teachers will have their cards marked. They know that their chances of further promotion, or even continued employment may be much curtailed. We want additional choice, and I believe we will get it with this Bill.

The measure is another major stride forward in providing parents with more information about their children's schools. For parents to make an informed choice, they must have access to as much information as possible about what goes on in their children's school and how much their children are learning.

I welcome specifically the Bill's reference to Her Majesty's inspectorate. In the past there have been long intervals between full inspections of schools. Indeed, some schools have never had the benefit of a full inspection. Inspections highlight not merely the successes of the school but its inadequacies. They present an opportunity to put those inadequacies right, and they enable teachers to identify the shortcomings of the school.

The Labour party seems to think that allowing schools to choose their own inspection teams will reduce the validity of the inspections. I do not support that view. Inspectors will have to be selected from a list which has been approved by Her Majesty's inspectorate. The list will be carefully supervised, and those who fail to meet the rigorous standards imposed by Her Majesty's inspectorate will not remain on the inspection teams.

The Bill will ensure that schools are inspected every four years. Let us compare that with the present system, in which full inspections are infrequent and, in some cases, non-existent.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The hon. Gentleman intervened earlier to say, in my view correctly, that he who pays the piper calls the tune. That was the hon. Gentleman's own comment. Surely that will apply in the case of schools taking on inspectors. Schools will choose those who will give the best report for the school at the cheapest price.

Mr. Pawsey: First, the inspectorate is not paid by the local education authority that runs the school which is to be inspected. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman somewhat underestimates the intelligence of headmasters and staff, who have an interest in ensuring that the report that they receive has some validity for their school. Headmasters believe that a report will be of some value to the school. I am having difficulty in making my voice last.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that I, as a former head teacher of a school, would automatically look favourably on and pay for an inspection team which I knew would give a good report of the school? It is obvious that I would look for the people who would give me the best report. It baffles me that the hon. Gentleman can argue otherwise.

Mr. Pawsey: Whichever inspectors a headmaster selects, they will be from an approved list. All the inspectors on the list will have been approved. The inspectors will be rigorously inspected by the inspectorate. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Steinberg: The hon. Gentleman should get himself a drink of water.

Mr. Pawsey: I am doing all right, thank you. If interventions like that are typical of what the hon. Gentleman seeks to do, I cannot help but feel that he would be better employed had he stayed in his former profession.

Ms. Gordon: If there are not enough HMI and LEA inspectors to carry out sufficiently frequent inspections of schools, would not the logic be to increase the number of inspectors, who have maintained standards of excellence for many years, instead of cutting the service from 500 inspectors to 175 and replacing them with commercial firms of amateurs so that, as the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, the schools pay the piper and therefore call the tune?

Mr. Pawsey: The logic of the hon. Lady's argument is to leave the inspectorate exactly as it is. Even her Front-Bench team do not believe in that. She referred to taking on as inspectors people who are not qualified teachers. I shall make that point in my speech in my own way, if the hon. Lady will allow me to develop it.

The Bill will enable parents to study the reports. They will be able to read for themselves the truth about their child's school. The reports will help to demystify the education process. At present, parental decision-making takes place on the basis of hearsay—a sort of "what the parents say". The Bill replaces that guesswork with a factual, unbiased report. Naturally, parents want the best for their children. The legislation helps them to achieve that laudable ambition. It encourages more parental involvement in schools, because it makes parents more aware of what is taking place in the school.

I welcome clauses 2 and 6, which give the chief inspector a general duty to ensure that the Secretary of State is advised about the quality and standard of the nation's schools. I am also pleased that the Secretary of State retains his present powers to require the inspectorate to inspect specific schools. At present, Her Majesty's inspectorate fully inspects only about 150 schools a year. The new proposals will ensure that one quarter of all schools—about 6,000—will be inspected every four years. That is extremely important. That is the difference and the benefit. The measure should be widely welcomed by both Conservative and Opposition Members and certainly by parents.

I am also pleased to observe that not all the trade unions oppose the Bill. Peter Smith of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association wrote in "Report":

> "It is true that schools and teachers may have had a frequently ambivalent attitude towards HMI. Sometimes inspectors have seemed to be lofty theorists, remote from the day to day realities of the classroom, rather than expert practitioners whose inspection reports can be translated into action. Actual success in disseminating good practice—now voguishly termed 'quality assurance'—has not always been obvious."

It strikes me that that passage is something of an understatement.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: That quotation also helps to answer the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who was formerly a headmaster in Durham. Clearly, not all head teachers share his view about Her Majesty's inspectorate. I am firmly convinced that those who genuinely seek an improvement in the quality of state education will welcome the Bill.

Mr. Flannery: I also have the report from which the hon. Gentleman quoted. He neglected to read it all. At the beginning it says:

> "Kenneth Clarke's decision to privatise Her Majesty's Inspectorate and put local schools inspection up for private sector tender has been fiercely criticised. And rightly so."

After the part which the hon. Gentleman quoted, it says:

> "Yet HMI has always been justly respected for its professional integrity and political independence. Mr. Clarke's claim that his decision will give the national inspectorate increased autonomy is unconvincing. Some suspect that HMI has exercised its independence all too much for his liking."

Apart from the sentence which the hon. Gentleman read out, the article condemns the Bill. Yet the hon. Gentleman chose one sentence without telling us about the rest. That seems a little unfair, even from Rugby and Kenilworth.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman says that it is a sentence. It is a long sentence. If he looks at it again he will see that it is a full paragraph.

Mr. Flannery: Read it.

Mr. Pawsey: I have it here and I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to read it, too. I notice that he does not deny the accuracy of the passage that I quoted. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman.

It has been said with even more inaccuracy than usual that the Bill privatises Her Majesty's inspectorate. That is an interesting thought, given that most people believe that privatisation occurs when something is transferred from national or quasi-government control to private enterprise. In this case Her Majesty's inspector will have statutory powers and duties as laid down by this House. Contrast that with the present situation, in which his powers and duties are exercised on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The Bill gives Her Majesty's inspectorate greater independence than it enjoys at present. However, that does not mean that we are privatising or seeking to privatise Her Majesty's inspectorate. Frankly, those who take that view have not studied the Bill.

One benefit of the Bill is that it allows those who are not normally regarded as educationists—I am coming to the point made by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), if she will listen for a moment—to play their part in the education of the nation's children. Business men and managers will be able to make a practical input into a critical part of the education process. One criticism is that teachers go from school to college and back to school again without having

> "the benefit or advantage of the world of work",

as my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) said.

That is a substantial benefit means that people going into the inspectorate will take with them a practical knowledge of the business world, where the majority of the nation's children will be earning their daily bread. That will strengthen, rather than weaken, Her Majesty's inspectorate. There is virtue in bringing to schools the different knowledge, experience and expertise of people who have been in industry and understand its requirements. One seldom finds business men to be "lofty theorists", to use Peter Smith's phrase.

So far, I have referred only to Her Majesty's inspectorate, but clause 16 refers to the collection and publication of information about schools. That is indeed charter country and will ensure that parents will be provided with five important documents: first, an annual report about their children's progress; secondly, a performance table giving information on all schools in a given area; thirdly, a summary of the previous Her Majesty's inspectorate report; and, fourthly, a statement from the school's governing body about how it intends to tackle any shortcomings identified by Her Majesty's inspectorate. I would describe that as a rolling programme of improvement. Finally, it will provide parents with the annual report of the school governors.

It is genuinely revealing to contrast that battery of information with Opposition Members' feeble efforts.

[Mr. Pawsey]

They have produced a contract which is an optional extra —a sort of bolt-on goodie, a non-binding, sign-if-you-like bit of paper. Conservative Members have some sympathy with Opposition Members, because they only recently discovered that parents are interested in their children's education and have a material part to play in that process. There are even those who believe that Opposition Members' conversion to parents' rights is due more to the onset of a general election than to any true belief in parent power.

It is also difficult to reconcile their new stance as the parents' friend with their non-acceptance of a parental vote, when expressed through a secret ballot for a grant-maintained school. Clearly, in Opposition Members' eyes, some parents and some votes have greater value than others.

The best description of Labour's proposed, solemn but non-binding agreement comes not from my right hon. and hon. Friends but from a man who formerly sat with Opposition Members. He described Labour's measures as "humiliating and intrusive", a "patronising" policy initiated by "bossy, middle-class know-alls." That is a more accurate description than I could give. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who said it?] Robert Kilroy-Silk, who formerly sat on the Opposition Benches and was a colleague of the hon. Member for City of Durham, who is laughing so loudly. Mr. Kilroy-Silk's description is a valuable and perceptive view of what the Labour party intend to suggest to the House.

Therefore, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to accept the Bill. The sooner we get it into legislation and improve the quality and standard of education for the nation's children, the better.

5.45 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is always sad when someone is driven into a corner and becomes desperate. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) thought that no one would have read the report that he quoted. He did not say where it came from. It is the editorial from the magazine of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, which has 135,000 members, and it was written by Mr. Peter Smith, the general secretary. When the hon. Gentleman stoops to taking a few words which are in headlong collision with the view of an entire article, and tries to convey the impression that the article said what he says it said, it is very sad. It leaves one open to an accusation that we dare not make in this Chamber; otherwise, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth would hear me say it.

I had marked another part of that article—not the paragraph that I read in an intervention, which was near the paragraph quoted by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth. Hon. Members should listen to what Mr. Smith said next:

> "The attack upon local education authority inspectorates and advisory services is yet one more example of what has become an obsessive vendetta against local government in all its manifestations. Proper concern about the need for high quality, value for money public services is becoming the increasingly mindless Orwellian chant of 'Private sector good, public sector bad.'"

That is another paragraph from a report which says the exact opposite of the group of words that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth quoted.

I can understand that, because the Bill is so complicated and is born of desperation and stridency, it is difficult to explain, especially for Conservative Members who, only a few months ago, were defending the poll tax and saying how good it was. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth stood up and praised it to the heavens—they all did, calling it the flagship of their policy.

Now the flagship has been sunk, more quickly than the Mary Rose, but unlike that ship it will not come up again, even after a few hundred years. It is gone for ever. I think that the last peasants' revolt was in 1381. The poll tax caused a lot of trouble at that time.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science commissioned a report from the inspectorate to advise him. The report has come out and has been used in the press. One of my hon. Friends mentioned this. However, it was so alarming to the Secretary of State that he issued orders for it to be shredded. That shows his contempt for the inspectorate that he is now destroying. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) told the truth when he said that the Secretary of State, during a 61-minute speech, never got down to the fundamental reason for the Bill, which was the destruction of the inspectorate in the same way that he destroyed and shredded one of its reports to him.

What can one expect from people who do that sort of thing? They are desperate. Suddenly, 20 pages of the report by the Select Committee on Health went missing. There is an inquiry into how Tory Members who agreed those papers suddenly voted to get rid of them because they had been read in the Department of Health.

The Government are in such a fix with all their policies that a moderate organisation such as AMMA talks about their education policy being almost an Orwellian nightmare, with their hatred and vendetta and their praise of everything that is private. Apparently, private is good and all the rest is bad: if it moves, privatise it and if it does not move, privatise it. That is what the Government have got themselves into. The opinion polls will not stir; they have been the same for a year now, telling the Government that they should call a general election. The Government are pushing through all kinds of Bills at a speed that is almost unrecognisable as democracy.

This Bill, although smaller, is to education what the poll tax legislation was to taxation. It is equally daft and will have to be thrown out in time. I appeal to the Tory party to do so now. it is wrong and squalid and, like the poll tax, doomed to fail. It has a death wish within it. That was borne out by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, who floundered and did not know which way to turn when a single point was put to him.

The Bill flows from the so-called citizens charter which, of course, is no charter for any self-respecting citizen. The Tory party absolutely loathes the National Union of Teachers. I was one of the first to ask the Secretary of State to give way, but he would not give way to me—no, I am in the NUT. He does not like that. I was a head teacher. He is a lawyer. I might know a thing or two about education.

The NUT described the citizens charter in this document and exchanged letters with the Prime Minister, who was hard put to defend his stance. He is, these days, is he not? He had trouble today. We described the charter as "gloss without substance". The Bill is without

substance, and it does not even have gloss. It is a mess, and the Tory party knows it. It is already regarded with fear by teachers, parents and the general public.

It is so silly to start attacking the inspectorate through this Bill, which will be enacted because we do not have enough Members to stop it. It is seen as an attack on state education. It is another classic example of the Government's dogmatic, doctrinaire approach. They talk about Marxism, but I have never seen a group of Marxists as dogmatic and doctrinaire as this lot. When it comes to privatisation, they want to privatise everything. It is their obsession. The word is on the lips of every British citizen. Her Majesty's inspectorate and anybody connected with education knows that.

The Minister of State should go carefully. He got himself into a bit of a mess the other day, did he not, when he made a statement outside the House about the NUT? It sued him. He will have to pay a copper or two, will he not, for not telling the truth about the NUT outside the House? That is a dangerous habit to get into—one that I am sure he will never learn anything about.

Her Majesty's inspectorate is a body of distinguished educationists of profound integrity. They are deeply respected. Anybody who has had contact with the inspectorate knows that its task is arduous—that is mentioned in the article—and that it is difficult to get distinguished people to do the work. They are away from home a great deal. Like all of us, they are seen by the teaching profession, although as dedicated colleagues, as sometimes making a mistake or saying something with which we disagree. Generally, they are people of integrity who want to advance the cause of education but, like the rest of us, they are not always right. Neither are we, and we should admit it.

HMI has become a thorn in the Government's flesh because, year after year, in successive reports, it has told the truth about the Government. It does so in a moderate and restrained way, because it is not in a position to do otherwise. I know that from having served on the Select Committee on Education and Science all these years.

Next week, the Committee will question the Minister. Hon. Members should come and listen to our questions. The Minister knows that the inspectorate is a thorn in his flesh. That is why the Bill has been introduced. As AMMA has said, it is part of a vendetta and an obsession because HMI tells the truth which is not and never has been acceptable to the Government.

Ms. Gordon: I believe that, when the scheme was first announced, the inspectors described it as sinister. May I disagree with my hon. Friend's description of the Bill as a "silly mistake"? It is a sinister conspiracy to move education back to an elitist system, such as existed before the Education Act 1944, under which the majority of the population's children get a second-class education inspected by amateurs.

Mr. Flannery: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I withdraw the words "silly mistake". The silly mistakes to which we politely refer here are often crimes, but we do not attach such a name to them.

Let us look at the background to the Bill. The size of classes is increasing. They are bigger than they were 10 years ago, and they are getting even bigger. We all know the reason: there are not enough teachers or proper schools. Yet 400,000 teachers are not teaching. So many have left the teaching profession that we have been driven to recruit from Australia and even Germany, where people do not speak English. If teachers were paid a proper living wage, we could recruit them all over our own country.

There is a lack of books and equipment. Everyone in the teaching profession knows that. If hon. Members go in and look at the schools, they will see the lack of books and equipment. Dog-eared books are passed around and there is not enough money for major pieces of equipment. Schools lack general resources because they lack money. That is all part of the background.

Mr. Steinberg: May I tell my hon. Friend a little story about the age of books? Recently, a young student from Johnston school in Durham came to see me with a book that he was using for his A-level history. On the first page, it said, "This book belongs to Gerald Steinberg." In other words, that school is still using a book that I used 30 years ago.

Mr. Flannery: That story, which I knew about, is not only a true story and a condemnation of the Government, but a tribute to the way in which my hon. Friend and successive groups of children in state education have looked after their books. Nevertheless, in time, even those books become dog-eared, yet there is no money from the Government to buy more books.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: Not again.

Mr. Pawsey: If the hon. Gentleman's picture of the teaching profession is accurate, can he say why entrance to teacher training colleges has increased by 20 per cent. this year?

Mr. Flannery: Of course I can. I have given an accurate picture. Thousands of teachers have left the profession, and we want them back. However, at a time of mass unemployment—it is steadily heading towards 3 million—there are always people who decide to become teachers.

I was unemployed a long time ago, and I wanted to be a teacher, but it was difficult to get into a college. However, many of my colleagues had been unemployed before they eventually became teachers. When there is a great deal of unemployment, people will go into teaching, but the core of the teaching profession is made up of those who want to teach and who want the dignity of that profession. They want to be properly valued. They do not want to be slandered and abused as they have been by the Government for the past 12 years—hence their low morale. The Minister may smile, but he must try to deal with that fact, just as we will have to deal with it when he leaves all his mess.

Class numbers are increasing because of the insufficient number of teachers available, and schools face other problems because of crumbling buildings. Everyone knows what a mess they are in. Many of the schools have not been painted because they do not have the money to buy that paint.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, if a school is in a well-to-do area, there are bound to be plenty of books in each child's house. Their parents will listen to them reading and will take an interest. Those parents can also give more money freely to their child's school. If a school is in an area of high unemployment, the parents of pupils may have difficulty in finding enough

[Mr. Flannery]

money to feed their children, pay the rent and pay the poll tax, as well as all the other things that have been heaped upon them by the Government and then withdrawn when they panic about them. That means that that school will suffer. We will end up with a two-tier system because the school in the posh area will have plenty of money coming in from parents, while the school in the poor area will receive no such funds. Therefore, the children in the poor area will suffer. Ever-increasing class sizes will cause further problems for schools in poor areas.

The other morning, on "Today", the Secretary of State said that it was not always a bad thing to have a large number of pupils in a class. Let him say that to those who have children in the private sector. He should tell us how many children there are in classes in the private sector schools. Conservative Members s[illegible]ids to private schools while our children in the state sector take a kicking from the Government.

Teachers perform well, but they are always vilified and attacked by the Government. In the meantime, the specially favoured city technology colleges are absorbing massive amounts of money. Most Conservative Members do not know how much the CTCs and the assisted places scheme cost. I looked up that cost in the Government's own publications and found that it was nearly £700 million. That public money has been taken out of the education system and away from children who urgently need it and given to those who are already rich. We do not need any lessons from the Conservative party.

Private education is flourishing because of the assisted places scheme. Many of those schools receive £1 million and more each year of public money. That money is taken from the state education system.

Morale among teachers is low, and that feeling has been created by the Government. However, now the Government have begun to praise teachers because they know that they have gone too far. Dedicated independent inspectors have repeatedly drawn attention to the problems caused by low morale, increased class sizes and the poor state of school buildings. Their reports are an acute embarrassment to the Government, so HMI must go. However, the Bill is designed to ensure that it looks as though HMI has not gone. That is why the Bill, which will make all the problems worse, is pregnant with chaos. It will create such chaos in our schools, but then that is what will be caused by the new poll tax Bill and all the other Bills.

AMMA has stated that it wants

"good school inspection arrangements and improved and increased access to information about the quality of the publicly funded education service."

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth should read a little bit further than he did from its editorial. The association also states:

"We judge that the provisions of the Bill, as printed, are confused and inadequate for their purposes."

The hon. Gentleman should read that, and he should talk to the general secretary of AMMA. He should admit how he distorted what was said by neatly picking out a certain part of the editorial, when in fact that editorial was against the Bill.

The National Association of Head Teachers represents 35,000 heads and deputy heads. It is deeply concerned about the Bill, and, in the conclusion to its briefing, states:

"However, many in the Education Service, and very many Head Teachers, will feel that the correct balance has not been struck by this current piece of legislation. The consequences of the lack of balance, contained within an Act, as currently displayed in the Bill, are potentially very serious."

Those head teachers are important people. Conservative Members know that because they always praise head teachers, except me and my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg).

Mr. Pawsey: You can understand why, Martin.

Mr. Flannery: Of course I can, because, in common with HMI, I tell the truth. I am happy to read more of what Conservative Members would consider as "select" truth from leading teachers' organisations.

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman always tells the truth, perhaps he can explain to the House his earlier remark that money spent on assisted places and the CTCs goes to those who are already rich. Can he justify that remark? He knows perfectly well that the assisted places money is provided to parents through a proper means test. At least one third of that money goes to parents whose total income is less than £8,000 a year. He knows perfectly well that the CTCs choose pupils who apply to them and ensure that those pupils are representative of the area in which each CTC is based. Will the hon. Gentleman have regard to the truth and withdraw his earlier remarks?

Mr. Flannery: I am content with completely disagreeing with the Minister. He knows as well as I do that the money for the CTCs and the assisted places scheme has been siphoned from the education system into middle-class areas. If he can disprove that, he can do so later.

Mr. Steinberg: Is my hon. Friend also aware that the Minister forgot to tell us that savings are not taken into account in the means test?

Mr. Flannery: The Minister and his colleagues know that I am telling the truth, but they are free to try to disprove what I have said.

What the NUT has said about the Bill will also be denounced by the Government. It states:

"The proposal that each school chooses its own inspection team could lead to a 'cosy relationship' with Heads and Governors choosing inspectors who will be friendly to existing practice within the school. Given the inevitable wish to guarantee being 'bought in' four years later, inspection teams are liable to play safe in terms of their report. If they do not, a different inspection team may be chosen four years later with no consistency between one inspection and the next."

That would be dangerous. At the moment, dedicated inspectors go around the country. I believe that there are insufficient numbers of them and that Her Majesty's Inspectorate needs more personnel, never mind reducing its number, to report properly. That would sink the Government, and they would be shredding a few more reports if that happened.

The NUT also states:

"The facility for schools to choose their own inspectors is likely to result in parents receiving a report in which they can have little confidence.

Inspection should be seen as a contribution to the ongoing process of raising pupil achievement within a particular school, rather than the 'Labelling of that School'".

The Government intend to label certain schools as sink schools. They intend to produce a league table as though we were talking about football teams. That cannot be done

in education, because education does not allow for it. An important lesson lies ahead for those who intend to do that to our children and teachers.

The briefs which hon. Members have received from many of the teachers' organisations accentuate a number of points. One is that teachers have immense respect for the existing inspectorate and suggest ways not of privatising it but of improving and expanding the inspectorate and giving parents improved access to information about the public education system.

Next, they are immensely fearful of the Bill and consider it to be confused, inadequate and fraught with peril for the education service. Provision for the majority of pupils is getting worse, the teacher-pupil ratio has worsened for the first time in 26 years and the average size of primary class is larger than it was in 1981. City technology colleges receive £150 per pupil more than local authority schools, grant-maintained schools average £187,000 by way of capital grant, and LEA schools get only £18,000.

We need a real citizens charter, standing for the rights of education. Such a charter should lay down enforceable standards of education, with maximum class sizes, so that there are not huge classes in one school or in one part of a school and smaller classes elsewhere.

Mr. Pawsey: If the hon. Gentleman believes what he is saying, will he explain why his own contract does not set out what he is aiming at?

Mr. Flannery: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I mean every word I say. I would answer his question if I knew what it meant. That intervention was about as clear as his speech.

We must have maximum class sizes so that we know where we stand and minimum levels of resourcing for books and equipment so that there is enough money in the public sector to provide our children with good equipment and books, items that are to be found in all private schools. There must be minimum standards of provision for support staff. In other words, there must be cover for teachers who are ill or who need to be on courses. Perhaps Conservative Members do not appreciate that, in schools generally today, only the lucky teachers can go on courses, particularly in primary schools. It is clear from the blank looks on their faces that they are not aware of that.

Many primary school teachers cannot attend courses because teachers are not available to take their classes when they are away. In addition, most of them have no free time or marking time. They come to school early in the morning, work through lunch time and leave later at night than they used to. Change is imposed on them with undignified haste, and it contributes to lowering teacher morale. Supply staff must be guaranteed to cover teacher absences. When teaches are away ill, other teachers are not available to take their classes, particularly in the primary sector, but increasingly in the secondary sector.

Those are all matters which, in a moderate and restrained way, HMI has pointed out over the years to successive Conservatives Governments. The result is that the Government have introduced a ghastly Bill to get rid of awkward people who keep telling the truth about what the Conservatives have been, and are, doing to education.

The Government have embodied in this pitiful measure their contempt for our excellent and improving, but grossly underfunded, state education system. Just as the NHS is not safe in their hands and is being steadily privatised, so our education system, which is also now being steadily privatised, is not safe in Conservative hands. The whole nation is unsafe in their hands. The Bill is a major warning to all. It must be fought and ultimately thrown out, as it will be, and soon, by a Labour Government.

6.14 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The debate provides us with a timely opportunity to take stock of what is happening in our schools, to speak of the success to date of some of the reforms introduced in the last five years —the Education Act 1956 and the Education (Reform) Act 1988—and to examine the changes outlined in the Bill to improve still further the education arrangements for our children.

Concern about education was a major motivation for me to enter politics. I was elected to North Yorkshire county council in 1985 and served, albeit for only a couple of years, on the education committee and schools committee. I was a governor of several schools, including two large comprehensives, a large junior school, a special school and the York college of art and technology, a further education college.

It was a pity that I was not able to serve longer on those bodies. My service was interrupted because I was elected to this place in 1987, and I admit that education has not been an avenue into which I have channelled in my party activities. But I visit many schools in my constituency regularly and particularly keep closely in contact with the school that my children have attended. Two of my children have left school and gone on to college and my youngest is still there. I shall say more about that school later.

One might believe, listening to some hon Members' speeches and from reading the newspapers, that the whole of our school system is crumbling. I cannot speak for other parts of Britain—I will not speak for what I have not seen —but I know what is happening in North Yorkshire schools. The education system there is delivering a first-class system of schooling for our children. There is much of which we can be proud in our schools. Parents and the public at large can be proud of our schools and of the achievements of our young people.

In the 1986 Act—I was serving on the local education authority at the time—the Government introduced a requirement for reports to be presented to parents and introduced parent governors. Last week I received, as a parent, the annual report for Huntington school in my constituency on the outskirts of York. I spotted in it only one factual error. It referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) as having been promoted to Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, when he is still the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. That must be a prophecy that he will retain his seat in the general election and will later be promoted to Minister of State.

There is a genuine concern lest, in giving information and promoting the results of examinations, reports to parents may neglect other important areas of educational activity—that, in the pursuit of better examination reports, some of those areas may be left behind. That does not appear to be happening at Huntington school, so we must examine some of the issues examined in its annual report.

[Mr. John Greenway]

There is, first, a detailed report about events earlier this year when the 25th anniversary was celebrated. The school does not have a long history, but it has some excellent examination reports to which I shall refer. Clearly, the school's social life is extremely active. The report includes a long section on how the school has implemented the proposal to have its own budget. I supported the measures in the Education Act 1988 to introduce such a system.

Indeed, North Yorkshire already had a pilot scheme in place before the last election. The report shows that the school has benefited greatly from controlling its budget and resources. It has made improvements by creating a new post of office manager, upgrading stock in the library, extending and reorganising the office for clerical staff, creating new areas for sixth-form students, including a BTEC facility and an additional seminar room, significantly upgrading technology and audio-visual equipment, implementing an extensive programme of internal decoration and providing additional departmental resources for text books and equipment.

The report states:

"The governors' broad policy is to use the increased funds wisely, both in the provision of the best up-to-date facilities and equipment for pupils and for enhancing the school environment with emphasis on security, safety and energy efficiency. Certainly, we are very pleased with the extra flexibility and benefits we now have over purchasing, decorating and maintenance".

That sentiment has been echoed by other head teachers. When I visited another large comprehensive school only a couple of weeks ago and addressed the sixth form, the headmaster told me that the school has now been able to carpet and curtain some of the noisiest classrooms, creating a much better environment for teaching the children.

That was one of the schools that took part in the pilot project for LMS in 1986-87. Although the LMS initiative has brought considerable benefits, problems with the funding formula for junior schools and some smaller comprehensive schools still exist. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the North Yorkshire education authority will continue to consult to ensure that the best arrangements are made and that some schools do not suffer as improvements are made in others.

The annual report also deals with the school's budget, which was £2 million in 1990-91 and has increased to more than £2·2 million in 1991-92, the current academic year. The report says that 1,316 pupils are now on the roll and that the staff consists of 80 teachers. [HON. MEMBERS: "What has that to do with the Bill?"] It has everything to do with the Bill, because it proves that it is possible to provide comprehensive information for the benefit of parents. That is what the parents charter is about and it goes to the heart of the Bill.

I have not yet referred to the publishing of examination results, which is the main concern about which we have heard this afternoon. A conclusion which I, as a parent, draw from the information that I have just given is that the school is spending £1,671 per pupil—a 10·3 per cent. increase on the figure for the previous year. We must bear in mind the fact that the education authority still has responsibility for some expenditure. That figure represents the best bargain that exists in public spending.

I sincerely believe that the money that we are spending on our schools provides an excellent return, and it must continue to be one of the key areas for growth in public expenditure. The past 12 years under this Government have seen a growth in public expenditure and it is for local education authorities and county councils to decide on the priorities for their expenditure. The Government and North Yorkshire county council have done that. No one can argue that expenditure per pupil provides anything other than value for money, provided that we look at the other side of the coin and consider what we can achieve with that money in terms of successful education.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) referred to school numbers, and I am sorry that he is no longer in the Chamber to hear my remarks. The figure in the annual report shows that the school roll of 1,316 and 80 teachers is a pupil-teacher ratio of less than 17:1. I think that, in 1979, the figure was about 19:1. My hon. Friend the Minister is nodding, so I seem to have the statistic right.

Examination successes are a major concern. The annual report points out that last year's A-level results were the best that the school had achieved and this year's were even better. It says:

"17·6 per cent. of all passes were at A grade and 60·3 per cent. of all grades were at C or above".

That was a commendable result. As for the results of the GCSE examinations, the report says:

"Bearing in mind that our policy is that all students are generally entered for GCSE examinations in all the subjects they are studying"—

no picking and choosing those most likely to succeed—

"it reflects great credit on staff and students that only 26 of the 1,780 examination entries were ungraded. At the other end of the scale, 53·9 per cent. of students achieved five or more grade C passes compared with 49·3 per cent. in 1990."

As a proud father, I can tell the House that my son Anthony was included in that 53·9 per cent.

It is well known that schools in North Yorkshire achieve considerably above-average results. North Yorkshire does not spend above-average amounts on resources—its resourcing is about the national average. Some hon. Members wish to point out that North Yorkshire is a relatively affluent area, and I willingly accept that. However, affluence does not ensure that children will do better.

Comparative figures for other schools in North Yorkshire show that the number of grade A and B passes range from 18·8 per cent. to 51 per cent. Some head teachers were grossly offended when figures in the *Sunday Times* survey omitted state schools in North Yorkshire, because some of those state schools have performed considerably better in their A-level results than some of the best independent schools in the United Kingdom. Therefore, even in an affluent county some state schools do better.

As for the publication of a more detailed breakdown of results, I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister of State another document that came with the annual report. It gives a breakdown of the number of students entered in each subject at GCSE and A-level in 1990-91 and 1989-90, and the number of passes obtained at each grade. I used my marker pen to mark the grades that my sons had attained in the examinations. I found nothing offensive in publishing such information.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State say earlier that we should persist in trying to devise ways of making value-added judgments

about children's progress. It seems that some comprehensive schools do not have sixth forms, so the child moves on to a sixth form college to take A-levels. The child may have poor GCSE results or good ones. We should also address the issues of how he or she performs at A-level or on a business studies course at a further education college.

One benefit to be derived from testing seven, 11, 14 and 16-year-old pupils is that, over time, we shall be able to monitor their progress and give parents the information that they need on their children in a way that they can understand and—the key issue—to help them to feel encouraged that they are working with teachers, head teachers and the governing body to the benefit of their children's education. That is happening increasingly in schools in my constituency. They may be performing in the best way—I perceive that to be so—and we should work towards attaining that standard in all our schools across the length and breadth of Britain. To do so we must introduce new regulations, and the Bill does that.

The first of my pleas to my hon. Friend the Minister is to take care that, in drafting the regulations to improve standards in sectors where that is needed, we do not undo good work or create unnecessary difficulty for schools that already provide the very best. We should allow the necessary flexibility. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would agree and I shall send him the report to study. If we can ensure that all schools send such reports to parents and include the performance of each individual child, it will lead to greater parental involvement in our children's education.

Ms. Gordon: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the publication of raw materials in league tables will mean that schools considering their position in the league will become increasingly reluctant to accept children with special needs? Consequently, those children will, to their detriment, be educated in sink schools. The hon. Gentleman approves of the testing of seven-year-olds. Does he know of the concept of reading readiness? Many children are not ready to learn to read until the last term of infant school, and if they are tested and pushed too early by teachers and parents, it can undermine their confidence, preventing them from becoming readers, not helping them. Therefore, the test could prove to be a two-edged sword.

Mr. Greenway: I listened with interest to the hon. Lady and am not out of sympathy with her concern. However, there is no evidence that children with special needs will not be accommodated in schools at all levels. In 1986, I was a governor of a junior school which was one of four schools competing for pupils under a shared catchment area policy. That was before the Education Reform Act 1988 and parents could choose which school their child would attend. My school specialised in educating children with special needs and enjoyed great success.

On the hon. Lady's second point, on the telephone today I asked the chief education officer of North Yorkshire, Mr. Fred Evans, about the parents charter. He suggested that we should consider it the other way round. He said that, based on the current performance of schools in the county, parents sending children to schools in North Yorkshire could expect that more than 95 per cent. of seven-year-olds would achieve the reading ability laid down in the test and there was an 82 per cent. chance that the child would be ahead of chronological development. Therefore, I do not believe that the hon. Lady's assertion is borne out by the facts.

We have heard much claptrap this afternoon about the Government's proposals on the vexed question of inspections. There will certainly be controversy when the issue is discussed in Committee. Yesterday, North Yorkshire education authority discussed the issue. It resolved that the council supports the principle of independent inspections of schools. It is important that the House should accept that principle. There is great benefit to be derived from having independent inspectors who are properly trained and monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate.

I have sympathy with the two reservations expressed by the county council. It said, first, that the education authority would wish to maintain a school advisory service to help schools to remedy faults found in inspections. Secondly—this lies at the heart of our proposals—the authority would want to be able to take action to remedy faults when governors are inactive and fail to take any action on inspections. It would be wrong and unwise of us to rely totally on the willingness of parents and governors to ensure that action considered necessary following an independent inspector's report is carried out.

I do not suggest that we should retain the inspectorate as it is now; we are absolutely right to bring in an independent inspectorate and allow Her Majesty's inspectorate more of a monitoring role. However, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give careful consideration to the crunch issue.

Ultimately, if local education authorities are retained, their role must be to decide policy, provide resources and play a part in monitoring the progress of policy implementation. I am not advocating that a local education authority inspectorate should be sent in on a regular basis, but it would be wise to consider ensuring that there remains a reserve power. Perhaps we should not abolish section 77(3) of the Education Act 1944, and the education authority should reserve the power to send its own inspectors into a school which remains under local education authority control and in which there are clearly management problems.

During the last election campaign, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary came to my constituency. At a public meeting, there was a lively debate on education reforms—a key issue in that election campaign—and I said that I strongly suspected that, by the time of the next election, there would not be one school in North Yorkshire that was grant-maintained. That is the case. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members laugh. I predicted that none of the schools would think it necessary to seek that status. However, schools in other parts of the country have done so, and that says rather a lot against the education authorities from which those schools have escaped. Many of those authorities are Labour-controlled.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I do not like to have to confront the hon. Gentleman with facts, but I must tell him that the overwhelming majority of grant-maintained schools are in Tory areas.

Mr. Greenway: If that is the case, I stand corrected. One or two schools in the North Yorkshire education authority area have expressed interest, but none has taken the step

[Mr. Greenway]

of becoming grant-maintained. That speaks volumes for the education service provided by the North Yorkshire authority.

I hope that in winding up the Minister will be able to answer my questions and will confirm that there is nothing in the Bill to prevent a local education authority from forming its own independent inspectorate which schools may prefer to use. Of course the authority will have to tender for the contract along with private inspectors in the normal way, but the matter should be carefully considered.

When the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), came to North Yorkshire, he found a great deal which pleased him. If we want to make the best education service available everywhere, it behoves Ministers to come to North Yorkshire more regularly to see what it is doing to get education right. That will ensure that the benefits of our success can be passed to schools in other parts of Britain.

6.41 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I was pleased at the way in which the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) commented on the high quality of much of the state sector. In debates that tend to focus on faults, there is an inevitable tendency to forget about what is good in education. Teachers sometimes feel that they suffer from general and unfair criticism. The hon. Gentleman spent so much time commenting on the school which I understand his children attend that he gave the impression that he was standing as a parent governor and was making the opening speech of his campaign.

Mr. John Greenway: I have been a governor of the school.

Mr. Taylor: In that case, perhaps the hon. Gentleman is on a re-election campaign. We agree with much of what he said about the Bill's proposals, because, although I do not think that he intended it, what he said amounted to criticism. He supported much of what we have said, not least in his succinct and accurate description of what an LEA should do and the need for it to have the power, in some instances, to inspect what is going on in schools and help put matters right.

As I have said, much of what happens in the state sector is good, but there are clear problems. It is not politically divisive to say that, because that view is held on all sides. Teachers complain of difficulties in education and blame the Government, just as much as the Government tend to put the blame on teachers.

In the past few days, a series of problems have been reported in the press. Yesterday's issue of *The Guardian* reported on an NUT survey showing that over a quarter of primary school classes contain more than 30 pupils. Sunday's issue of *The Observer* reported that, in the past three years, parents have spent £75 million on basic books and equipment for schools to make up for underfunding by the Government. *The Times Educational Supplement* reported on Friday that instrumental music teaching provided by schools has in some areas been cut by more than a third. We read of parental concerns about the shortage of qualified science teachers, the lack of nursery places and the poor condition of many school buildings.

The initiatives presented by the Government, after 12 years in office, in this Bill and in the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill do not address one of those multitudinous concerns. The so-called parents charter offers only the promise of regular school inspections and more information for parents. No one would deny the importance of regular school inspections or of information to parents, but much else is needed which the Government do not offer. Inspection must be thorough and must be followed by good advice. Parents need meaningful and helpful information and action to put right what is discovered to be wrong. The Bill offers none of those things.

How will the Bill improve standards when it reduces the number of Her Majesty's inspectors from 480 to 175 and reduces the role of HMI to that of a supervisory body? It farms inspection out to private companies to be bought in by schools which will be offered choice only on the basis of who offers the most easy-going report at the cheapest cost. It does not specify how information will be provided, but grants unlimited power to the Secretary of State to require whatever he wishes, when he wishes it, without consultation.

If the Bill is supposed to be about raising standards and giving full information to parents, it will fail. I shall later explain why in more detail. If it is about winning votes by taking a populist platform—which I suspect is the case—it will likewise fail, because parents will become increasingly concerned when they look at the Bill's detail. Parents are well aware that the problems created in schools by the Government are too far-reaching to be solved by the Bill's provisions.

Liberal Democrats have deep-seated concerns about the Bill and will oppose it and seek detailed and comprehensive amendments in Committee. Our main worry is about the fragmentation of the inspectorate. The Bill says that the chief inspector for England will have the duty to keep the Secretary of State informed about the quality of education and standards in schools. However, his power to do that is seriously limited by the reduction in the number of inspectors from 480 to 175. That reduction will mean a loss of many specialist skills, and the time of inspectors will be largely taken up by the new regulatory function.

The Government introduced the Education Reform Bill, now the Education Reform Act 1988, and other major education reforms, but they are now breaking the back of the one body that could effectively report on how successfully those reforms are working in the nation as a whole. If the Government really want to know how the system is performing, they should strengthen Her Majesty's inspectorate, not weaken it.

How will competition between inspection teams promote higher standards? If the basis of competition, which the Government have adopted from the private sector, is offering a good product at a low price, what choice does that leave schools except to choose inspection that is likely to offer an advantageous report at an advantageous price? Even if that were not so, financial constraints on schools could mean that they will have little choice but to opt for the cheapest teams. Small schools, of which there are many in areas such as mine, are likely to suffer most from the cost of that process.

The chief inspector is required to advise the inspection teams, but who will advise schools on who to call in, the kind of contract to draw up and the qualities to be sought

in the inspection team? What advice will there be about the form that inspection should take? There are no details in the Bill about that, and that gives rise to justifiable fears that inspections will not even be of current quality. Frequent but poor inspections are not an improvement on infrequent but good inspections. Will there be the ability to deliver detailed departmental inspections? Will there be an examination of how effectively cross-curricular subjects such as environmental education are taught?

The Government are foolish to underestimate the value that schools place on a local education authority's continuing and knowledgeable role and its knowledge of an area's background. Where in this Bill is the opportunity for follow-up advice and further inspections to be called in when that is necessary? The benefits of on-going support and advice will be lost, to the detriment of our schools, and the Government have little to say about that.

We risk more than the inspection system. Because it is so tightly worked in with the advisory system, there is a fear that, in the process of sorting out, we could lose much that is of value in the advisory system as well. The Government have not explained how they envisage that process taking place in such a way as to prevent that.

If the HMI can have a role in organising private inspection teams, why not keep local inspections but have them monitored by the HMI rather than having them purely subject to LEA supervision? That would ensure the strength of a locally based system linked into advice, but with monitoring from a national body to ensure that standards of independence and rigorous inspection are upheld. If the Government were coming forward with that proposal—it would not require substantive amendment to change their present proposal into that one—there would be a broad welcome for it. Instead, because of an ideological commitment to privatisation and competition in a sector where it is inappropriate, the Government are leaving us with a Bill for which they claim many advantages but in which all those commenting on it can see only disadvantages and ultimately falling standards.

If the Government do not accept that that will be the result, are they prepared to publish the results of the consultation exercise on the inspection system that is to be embarked on? I very much doubt it. So far, the process has attracted damning criticism, and praise has been hard or impossible to find.

Who will make up the inspection teams? We have the requirement that a lay member be included, but how about the rather more important principle that, for example, there should be a member with expertise in special needs education to examine what is happening on that? Will there at least be an assurance that training given to would-be inspectors will include training in assessing the quality of special needs education?

Among my deep misgivings about the Bill is a fact that is obvious to anybody who looks at the Bill—there is no detail in it. The Government are giving themselves sweeping powers to set up a system, but they have refused to give details of how it will work in practice. The Secretary of State has said repeatedly that he understands the problems of pupils with special needs, but he has refused to make provision for the concerns that we have expressed.

The Secretary of State spoke about league tables and his understanding of the value-added principle, but he has refused to do anything about incorporating it. As is so often the case with the Government, particularly when they frame education legislation, they are asking Parliament to grant the Secretary of State wide powers and are leaving him, unfettered by proper debate or restrictions on what he does, to prescribe the details of what will happen.

The part of the Bill dealing with the publication of information by schools gives the Secretary of State many powers, but few details of how he proposes to use them, and gives parents no powers to get something done about what that information reveals. We understand that the Government's intention is that LEAs should publish league tables, including exam results, truancy rates and figures on the numbers continuing education or entering employment on leaving school.

The Secretary of State says that he wants straight, understandable information, not cooked figures. However, the limited information that he proposes to give will mean confusion rather than clarity and will lead to unfair comparisons between different schools. If the Secretary of State wants to help parents to choose the right school for their children, this is not sufficient.

Simplistic league tables will discourage schools from admitting pupils with special needs and so reduce opportunities for those pupils. They will encourage teachers not to enter pupils for exams in which they are not certain that the pupils will score highly, and so reduce opportunity for those pupils. They may tell parents, rightly or wrongly, that the school is under-performing, but they do nothing to give parents or pupils any opportunity to do anything about it.

Few would disagree that information for parents is important. Those parties committed to a freedom of information Act have already committed themselves to a far broader measure than is proposed in the Bill. There must be enough information to give a fair reflection of the achievements of the school. If the Government are insistent on compelling LEAs to draw up league tables, why can they not also insist on the giving of background information?

Why are the Government pressing ahead with their plans so determinedly despite the fact that the Audit Commission has said that it is possible to measure the performance of schools by showing the progress made by pupils rather than raw results? For the first time, the Secretary of State showed some signs of beginning to understand that principle, but he refused to make any provision to ensure that such information is published in a form that is accessible to parents. On the other hand, he still has an over-abundance of enthusiasm for raw data that do not provide anything like the same information for parents.

A school with an intake of high achievers does nothing more than we expect if they leave as high achievers. A school whose intake is of low achievers has achieved something truly remarkable and worth while if at least some of them leave as high achievers. Why demolish the reputation and self-confidence of such a school with crude league tables that would relegate that excellent school to the also-rans?

If the Government want an alternative, would it not make sense to give the job of establishing performance measures and the task of specifying the form in which the information is to be published to the Audit Commission, which specialises in such measures? If they are not prepared to take that step, they should at least make a commitment in the Bill, or even across the Dispatch Box

[Mr. Taylor]

in the way that they refused to earlier, to ensuring that value-added information is made available alongside the crude information.

If the Secretary of State wants to ensure that parents can make important decisions about schools, he should give them the information that he said earlier that he believes is a helpful part of any analysis of how a school is performing. Nothing in what the Audit Commission said would require detailed intricate information at the bottom of every list to help the average parent to understand it. The Opposition parties might want more to be added about children with special needs, but that is not my point. I am asking only that the Government adopt the Audit Commission policy and show the value added by a school.

It is obvious from the Minister's unwillingness to come forward that the Government's aim is not to give useful information to parents but to create lists that will distort and deceive. I may be in a stronger position to say this than Labour Members, but, above all, lists will show schools in deprived areas—often those with the greatest numbers of pupils who do not have English as their first language—as under-performing. Uniformly, those schools are in LEAs run by the Labour party or in some cases by the Liberal Democrats. The Government are creating a political weapon that, in its present form, will do nothing to help parents to make rational choices. We are not arguing that this information should not be made available. We are saying that all the information—not just that which suits the Government—should be made available. When there is evidence that the value-added approach to providing information is possible, and will provide for fairer assessment of a school's quality, as the Secretary of State admits, why not use all the available options?

What do the Government envisage with these league tables? Such choice as the Government offer, if choice it is, will be meaningless to most parents in rural areas such as mine, as they do not live within easy travelling distance of several schools from which they can make a choice. Even in urban areas it will not be long before schools that show up at the top of the league tables are full and, again, parents will have no choice but to send their children to schools which the Government are creating league tables to rubbish but for which they are providing no resources to solve the problem.

For most parents in Cornwall there is no option but the local school. Parents want to know that that school is providing a good education for their children, not that there is a better school at the other side of the county to which they have no hope of sending their children. If there are weaknesses, parents want to know that resources will be provided to put right those weaknesses, but the Bill does not provide for that. Above all, no one wants a local school to be labelled a failure if it is a success in terms of value added and of improving a poor child's education.

My comments reveal what I hope will be raised in detail in Committee, and I shall certainly raise such issues. I hope that the Secretary of State will participate in the Committee. He portrays the Committee as dealing with a Bill that is a Government flagship, one that is vital for the nation, a principal aspect of the Prime Minister's citizens charter and fundamental to the parents charter. However, there is little chance that the Secretary of State will attend the Committee to defend the proposals in detail, and no wonder now that we have seen how weakly he performed when trying to do so in the debate.

I also support the request that the Bill should be brought to a Special Standing Committee. One of the abiding features of the Government's reform process has been a lack of consultation and the infliction of rapid change on schools, followed by a rapid reversal of those changes. The lack of consultation has been raised by the Secretary of State to the status of high art in his proposals for the inspectorate. If the Bill were dealt with in a Special Standing Committee, we could call the people who will be directly affected by and who are most knowledgeable about the issues. At that late stage, we could at least have a genuine consultation and debate with everyone involved.

It is hypocritical for the Government to argue that the Bill is about freedom of information, about making available to parents and to the wider public information on which to judge schools and about making available what they regard as an improved inspection system, but then to refuse hon. Members permission to see the evidence presented to the Secretary of State about the inspectorate and to refuse to publish the consultation responses about proposals for the inspectorate.

Mr. Eggar: I know that the hon. Gentleman has not been in government and that he is not likely to be, but will he confirm for the record whether it is the Liberal party's official policy that internal advice to Ministers will always be released to the public?

Mr. Straw: The Rayner scrutiny on the HMIs.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says that the Rayner scrutiny on Her Majesty's inspectors was published, but there is a more fundamental issue. If Ministers seek to justify their policies by referring to information and advice made available to them, not to allow that information and advice into the wider public arena so that people can judge for themselves whether Ministers are telling the truth suggests that they are not telling the full truth.

In those circumstances, my party believes that the information should be made available, and that would be the aim of a freedom of information Act. The Government try to have it both ways. They say that the advice from civil servants is impartial and that it must not be seen because it is private to Ministers who make the decisions, but when they are questioned about their decisions, they refer to the private advice that they will not publish. That is a deceit. It is not democratic and it comes ill from a Government who propose the Bill in the name of freedom of information.

7.3 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I begin by congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on introducing the Bill which is a logical and sensible next step in the implementation of the citizens charter. Its two underlying aims are to raise standards and improve the quality of our educational system and also to widen choice which will be an informed choice and, with open enrolment, real and meaningful.

The Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association said:

"We . . . support the broad aims which underly this Bill —improved school inspection arrangements and increased public access to information about the quality of the

publicly-funded education service. We believe that proper steps towards these aims would contribute to securing further improvement in the quality of children's education."

The National Association of Head Teachers said——

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Read the rest.

Mr. Amos: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) read from the same brief. As he is a natural pessimist and I am a natural optimist, I quoted the good and he quoted only the bad.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman quoted the first paragraph of AMMA's report. I know that he would not like to do any injustice to the report, but if he were to read the second paragraph, which contains its judgment on the Bill, he might come to a different conclusion. To put the record straight, I shall read the second paragraph:

"We judge that the provisions of the Bill, as printed, are confused and inadequate for their purposes. We therefore ask Members to seek very considerable revision to the Bill in Committee, in order to secure more confidently that the reforms will realise their intentions."

If the hon. Gentleman is to be consistent with his opening sentence in which he quoted AMMA's report, he must proceed to argue—rightly—that the Bill is confused and inadequate for its purposes and he must tell us what revisions he will seek. If not, I suggest that he withdraws his reference to AMMA.

Mr. Amos: I was a member of AMMA for eight years and I understand its concerns, but I have quoted the brief which shows its support for the Bill's underlying aims. Therefore, it seems logical to support Second Reading and to debate the details later.

The National Association of Head Teachers said:

"There is undoubtedly a need to improve the regularity of formal school inspections, as well as a strong case for the provision of detailed information about schools to parents."

That is an example of another highly respected teaching organisation which supports the principles behind the Bill. Therefore, I assume that the Opposition will want to give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading.

On the question of raising standards, the Bill will increase the frequency and regularity of school inspections. It will lead to about 6,000 inspections a year compared with a measly 150 last year under the present system. I was a teacher in a state comprehensive school for eight years and I never saw an inspector. Perhaps my lessons were so good that they did not need to be inspected, but I never saw an inspector. Every school will in future be inspected every four years.

The Government are rightly concerned with not only the relevance of what is taught, but the quality of how it is taught. Hitherto, inspectors' reports have been kept secret from parents and from the public, but under our proposals every parent will automatically receive a readable and understandable summary of the report with a concrete action plan from the governors telling parents how they will act on the findings.

The method and procedure of the inspection will mean that HMI will develop new powers, duties and responsibilities and that it will become more powerful and independent of central Government, as it should be. However, its role as guardian of educational standards will not change. It will regulate the standards of the new inspection teams and only those registered by HMI will be allowed to operate. The work of the new teams will be carried out to agreed national standards, properly and carefully monitored and enforced by HMI.

The inspectorate will continue to be responsible to the Secretary of State. Even though LEA inspectors and advisory staff will probably be part of many of those teams, it is right to end the role of the local education authorities in inspection, because of the inherent conflict of interest. To have a dual role as advisor and inspector is incompatible, just as we agreed that it was in the water industry. It can never be right to be both judge and jury.

The Bill provides for a logical and sensible extension of local management of schools and the greater independence that we have given to our schools. Parents should have the right to independent information about their children's schools. They can still choose the local education authority if they want, but—importantly—they have the choice not to. If the local education authority team is better and cheaper, the school can choose it if it wishes.

It is wrong to suggest that schools will be able to choose an easy inspection team. With the enhanced and more meaningful quality control function of Her Majesty's inspectorate, it will not be possible for that to happen. It would not be in the professional or career interests of the inspectors. The leader of each inspection team, a registered inspector, will be licensed for a renewable fixed period, so his professional status would be at risk.

I agree that we must strive for as much consistency as possible in the new system. There are real problems under the current arrangements which the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) wishes to preserve for all time. He was not here a moment ago, but I see that he has now run hot foot into the Chamber. The Liberal Democrats want to retain the present system.

On the current arrangements, an Audit Commission report in 1989 entitled "Assuring Quality in Education" revealed wide variations in the size of the local education authority inspectorate services. It criticised their monitoring role as

"uneven and in some LEAs disturbingly small."

On 28 June this year, *The Times Educational Supplement* published a brief summary of the data available on LEA inspectors. The article said:

"Workloads varied considerably and between authorities . . . An Audit Commission survey of 67 authorities in 1988 showed that some inspectors spent less than 10 per cent. of their week observing in classrooms, whereas others spent more than 60 per cent. of their time in the classroom. A National Foundation for Educational Research survey found that only 40 per cent. of LEAs required inspectors to write any sort of report on all or most of their school visits."

Consistency is important, but equally and possibly more so are rigour and regularity.

Under the Bill, more information will be provided to parents and to the public generally. I am pleased that the proposal has widespread support among parents and within the profession.

Mr. Flannery: Where?

Mr. Amos: I just quoted AMMA and the NAHT, which are two highly respected organisations. Both have accepted the broad principles that underline the Bill. The hon. Gentleman should not be so pessimistic. He looks only for bad news, but there is a lot of good news around.

The National Association of Head Teachers—I did not rise to the dizzy heights of headship, but was merely a classroom teacher—says that it is

[Mr. Amos]

"strongly in favour of the principle of providing information on schools to parents."

It accepts the principle underlying the Bill.

I do not know what all the fuss is about. When I was the chairman of Enfield education committee in 1981, I decided to publish all the schools' public examination results, despite strong and sustained opposition from the educational establishment. I took the view, which I still hold, that parents and taxpayers had a right to that information. It was not for me to justify the release of the information, but for others to justify their demand that it should remain secret. The real reason was that they could not trust anyone to have the statistics, and that is the Labour party's view today.

There may have been a genuine fear that as a result of the release of information, there would be a widespread movement of pupils between schools—from the less popular to the good schools. That did not happen. There was no dramatic sea-change and there will be no dramatic sea-change under our proposals, which involve public examination results, national curriculum test results, truancy rates and the destinations of school leavers.

The vast majority of people know their local schools, but the parents who do not or who want to make a carefully considered choice of all the schools in the area are entitled to as much information as possible. The information should be provided as of right so that they can make as informed a choice as possible. Parents should not have to extract the information from unwilling local councils, which do not have a monopoly right to the information.

I understand the concerns about the examination league table. That is why contextual information will be available in the schools' prospectuses and in the governors' annual report. Together with the annual written report on the pupils' progress and our other reforms, we are building up a profile of pupil achievement. All good schools should already give annual written reports especially at a time of regular testing and with the measurable progress and benchmarks that we have built into the national curriculum.

Other hon. Members have referred to value added information. How can that be provided practically? As the National Association of Head Teachers—perhaps the hon. Member for Hillsborough would like to contradict this—rightly said:

"attempts to build in weightings according to social circumstances are almost certain to be unsuccessful and are likely to be ignored."

The concept of value-added information sounds fine, but in reality there are practical problems.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two issues. Social background is one possible measure and there are difficulties with that. The value-added proposals of the Audit Commission take as the fixed point what the child has achieved, whether GCSE or other level, and consider the point to which the child has moved at the next examined level. That could be done comprehensively, as the Secretary of State agreed. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that that could be published.

Mr. Amos: That is perfectly possible. As the results are published over a period of years and over the pupils' time in the school, the information will be built up and available, but one cannot have all the information immediately. One has to start the tests and start to produce the information before there can be a comparison. The hon. Gentleman's point is valid. I have always supported measuring and testing pupils as early as possible so that, as they go through school, one can measure how they are performing in relation to their potential. Unless one has the information at the beginning, one cannot measure later progress and thus identify those in need to whom help should be channelled.

The hon. Gentleman is right. We want as many tests as possible early on so that the information can be used for later comparisons. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, who is a perfectly reasonable man, supports that principle.

Mr. Eg[illegible] *indicated assent.*

Mr. Amos: I shall develop the point. Does one add 10 per cent. for children from single-parent families? That would be wholly wrong. When I was teaching, two of my best students came from single-parent households. Does one add 15 per cent. for ethnic minorities? We are told constantly of the high achievement rates of Asian pupils. The proposal is nonsense in practice. With the publication of the list of examination results in comparison with capital spending and with the list of LEAs showing what percentage of their potential schools budget has now been delegated to the schools to spend for themselves, we have already established the principle.

I do not believe that a convoluted system attempting to justify and explain the results would do anything other than add confusion to a situation in which we can safely trust the parents. Parents properly take many factors into account in choosing schools, including discipline, school uniform and the ethos of the school. The annual report and the prospectus contain all the relevant information about the school, including academic and non-academic activities, so parents have access to a complete profile of what is on offer at the school.

It is a pity that the Labour party is so misguided in its obsession with input into education. It judges everything by the amount of money spent—even though expenditure is at record levels—rather than according to how effectively that money is used and the quality of output. Northumberland came 63rd of 96 in the per capita spending league, whereas, in the exam results league table, it came 15th. That is a commendable result. What matters is how the money is spent, and we should not pour money in regardless.

The examination league tables published in the Sunday papers recently left out many good schools because trendy left-wing councils refused to co-operate and hand over the information. That simply proves how important it is not to publish partial information but to publish comprehensive data in a standardised format for all schools. That is exactly the purpose of the Bill.

For the past four and a half years, I have had to listen to the whingeing and whining of the Labour party while it has opposed every single measure that we have introduced to raise standards and widen choice. Usually, the Opposition have been confused, incoherent and inconsistent, as witness their stance on the pay review body. They take the view that, if something is not done by the state bureaucracy, it should not be done at all. On the provision of more information, the Opposition clamour for open

government and open access to education, yet they do not, and cannot, trust parents and the public to be given the information, let alone to interpret it sensibly.

I trust parents and I believe that they have the right to information. Unlike Labour Members, I believe in competition and incentives. I do not fear the facts; the whole point of establishing them in the first place is to find out where help is needed and to direct help to the schools that need it. The Bill is all about raising standards and it does not pretend that schools do not vary in quality. I strongly support it and commend it to the House.

7.21 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The Bill will dismember and privatise Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools. It will privatise the local inspectorate system, so that schools themselves will choose who is to inspect them. It is proposed that Her Majesty's inspectorate be vastly reduced in size. The Secretary of State told us today that the Government propose to cut the number of inspectors from 500 to 175. The inspectors will continue to carry out certain inspections at the instruction of the Secretary of State and, in advising the Government, will supposedly draw on a large number of inspection reports by independent inspectors. Schools will now buy in inspections. Regulators will be chosen and paid for by the schools being inspected. What a crazy idea. That certainly cannot provide HMI with a proper basis on which to advise the Government.

The proposal that each school should choose its own inspection team could lead to what has already been described as a cosy relationship, with heads and governors choosing inspectors friendly to existing practice within the school. That seems to me a fair assessment of what will occur, because the bought-in inspectors will inevitably wish to guarantee that they are bought in again four years later. They are bound to play safe in their report. If they do not, a different inspection team may be chosen four years later, and that will mean that there is no consistency between one inspection and the next.

It is incredible that much of the work will be done by audit inspectors, who will obviously include private money-making firms. That means that the quality assurance inspectors will be able to observe the work of the new independent inspectors only once a year. Some of HMI's work will have to be curtailed or stopped altogether. In the longer term, the capacity to provide district school inspectors will also be doubtful.

The Government argue that, as a result of the changes, HMI will be much more independent. That is nonsense, because the Bill explicitly gives Ministers power over HMI. In fact, it is clear that the Government are determined to silence HMI, because each year HMI has produced a damning report on the state of our education service, and each year the Government have simply ignored it. Every year, HMI says that our schools are crumbling and that many children do not get a proper education. Every year, the Government ignore such reports. Recently, they have not only ignored them; they have actually shredded them.

Now, they plan to get rid of the inspectors, so that they can no longer produce damning reports. Instead, the job will be given to private firms, which will have every reason not to make accurate reports about schools. Consequently, the Tories' undermining of our education system will be swept under the carpet. The Government talk about freedom of information and about parents' having all the information they need. We have heard about that in speech after speech, but the Bill proves that it is bunkum. The Government do not want parents to have information. They want it swept under the carpet because they know what they have done to our education system over the past 12 years.

How can anyone trust criticisms made or reports written under a system that allows inspection teams chosen by school governors to inspect schools and report on them? Inspections will be carried out by private consultants. How in the name of heaven can one allow a school to appoint its own inspectors and then expect an accurate unbiased report? For that matter, how can one expect schools to chose an unbiased consultant?

If any system of inspection is to work properly, those who carry out the inspection must be totally independent of those who are being inspected. They should also be seen to be independent. How can the public have any confidence in an inspection service under which schools will pick and chose their own inspectors? It is a mockery; it is ludicrous.

In my view, the inspectors should have a role that will ensure and support effective change and development within schools. Surely, under the Bill, it will not be in the business interests of the inspection team to encourage schools to develop better systems of self-evaluation and review. The new inspectors will be primarily responsible to the school rather than to the local education authority, and half the local education authority resources currently allocated to inspection, advice and advisory teachers will be delegated to schools to buy in their chosen inspectors. The reduction in resources will drastically curtail the ability of each LEA to monitor provision and provide support services to schools. More incredibly, it will remove LEA's right to inspect any school that they maintain.

To make matters worse, the inspection reports that the schools will receive will be anything but useful. They will be inconsistent and unreliable. The emphasis will be placed on inspections based on single schools rather than work on trends or issues, phases or subjects, such as Her Majesty's inspectorate's important recent work on the introduction of a national curriculum. As I have already said, the Bill will lessen the quality of advice that Her Majesty's inspectorate can give the Government.

The inspectorate should be free to investigate and to instigate reports on the effectiveness of Government policy, and not just to act on the direction of the Secretary of State. I am sure that most parents would welcome a broad picture of schools' strengths and weaknesses. Independent inspection teams are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge of the local community, a school's history and of other local schools to be able to provide reliable information about the effectiveness of that school. The result is that parents will receive a report in which they can have little confidence. Inspections should be regarded as a contribution to the continuing process of raising pupil achievement in a school rather than as labelling that school.

Perhaps the most objectionable thing about the private inspectors is the proposal that the inspection teams must provide a lay member. The criterion is that they must not be involved in education. That is absolutely appalling. How in the name of heaven can someone with no background in education make a valid judgment or criticism of a school? That is like asking a layman to go

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into a hospital operating theatre and make a judgment of how the doctor or surgeon is operating. That is a crazy and appalling system and it is the most disgraceful part of the proposals. How on earth can an inspection team function if it is not based on expertise and experience? The team can have expertise and experience only if its members have been involved in education at some point in their careers.

We have heard much about parents in this debate, and the views of parents should be paramount. Those views must come from representative parents such as governor parents or parent association officers, and they must be based on clear terms of reference. If teacher morale is not to be further undermined, there must be an absolute guarantee that individual members of staff should not become subjects of discussion. There must be an obligation to discuss a serious complaint with the head teacher and staff before the complaint is included in the report.

The Government introduced a national curriculum supposedly to develop a nationwide education strategy. However, the measures in the Bill are contrary to that aim. The Government are doing away with the mechanism by which national standards can be measured and improved. It is clear to me that the proposals in the Bill will make it easier for poor standards to go unnoticed. It will be much more difficult for parents to exercise rights in relation to their children's schools. So much for the Prime Minister's citizens and parents charters.

The second part of the Bill can be summed up as "league tables". The Bill gives enabling powers to the Secretary of State relating to information about the performance of schools. There are likely to be league tables giving examination results, truancy rates and leaver destinations for every school in a particular area. It is desirable for parents to receive meaningful information about their children's achievements and for schools to be able to monitor how effective they are. However, the publication of raw assessment and test results will not achieve those aims. Such publication would be divisive and meaningless.

Without a fuller analysis of value-added information, the publication of results will simply reflect the difference between schools in terms of cultural and socio-economic profiles of their pupil intakes. By comparing raw data with pupil intake and weighting achievements, if necessary, the information will not give the true picture at any school. The publication of results will not take account of the influence of the proportion of pupils with educational disadvantages, learning difficulties and other variables such as pupil mobility, teacher turnover and resourcing levels.

Monday's edition of *The Northern Echo*, the local paper for the north-east of England, carried an article about school standards. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) must have shares in that paper, because he seems to appear in every edition. That paper does not particularly support Labour's point of view, but, the article by the education correspondent stated:

"Education standards are rising as more pupils in County Durham schools get top marks in GCSE and A-level examinations. But the statistics vary considerably from school to school, demonstrating the difficulty of compiling league tables just as much as they may indicate problems in some schools."

The article quotes Keith Mitchell, the director of education for Durham. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State has a tremendous relationship with him and agrees with almost everything he says—as we read in the paper virtually every week. Keith Mitchell stated:

"the difficulties of judging school performance through examination statistics are notorious."

He presented a report to the county council in which schools were referred to in alphabetical order rather than in statistical order. He said:

"exam results are of great importance, but they are only one measure of a successful school. Results tend to reflect the social and economic background of pupils and their different expectations."

Instead of having an alphabetical league table, *The Northern Echo* decided to produce a league table according to GCSE results. It was no great surprise that that league table showed that four of the top five schools in the county of Durham were located in the university city of Durham, where a significant number of pupils' parents are academics. The city is also reasonably affluent.

In that area, the number of children receiving free school meals is considerably lower than in seven of the 10 schools at the bottom of the league, 20 per cent. or 30 per cent. of whose pupils come from deprived homes. *The Northern Echo* stated:

"Although this table highlights schools with a high percentage of O-level passes, we could produce a league table putting Carmel ahead of Park View, Belmont and St. Leonards"—

schools within the city—

"and promoting Wolsingham from 27th place to fifth place since over 90 per cent. of the pupils gained five or more GCSEs."

The point is that league tables can show anything we want them to. We cannot depend on a league table to show how well a school is doing. A league table can prove anything.

The Northern Echo then stated:

"The permutations are endless and the county council must pursue them so schools are fairly placed on the Government's examination league tables next year."

That proves conclusively that league tables are absolutely worthless. They provide information that should already be known if the job is being done properly.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and for his kind references earlier. I should have thought that the example that he has just given proves almost exactly the opposite. If he is capable of interpreting, as he has just demonstrated he is, the league table that showed that four of the top five schools are in his constituency, why are his constituents incapable of interpreting the table in that way?

Mr. Steinberg: With respect to the Minister, my constituents already know that. They do not need a league table to tell them that they have very good schools. The league table gives a false impression of the schools below the top five in the table. The table seems to imply that those schools are inferior, but they are not; they are just as good. In many respects, they could be doing a better job, but because of the raw results and the permutations, the statistics can prove anything at all.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not clear from the outbursts from Conservative Members, and especially from the Minister,

who clearly does not seem to understand education, that they really believe in elitism in education and the devil take the hindmost? That is why they want league tables.

Mr. Steinberg: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. League tables do not show anything more than we already know. We do not need them.

The publication of results will cause schools and pupils who are identified as failing in comparison with others to be demotivated and undermined. That is what league tables will do. It is also obvious that the publication of results will mean that, because such a huge significance will be given to the assessment of certain parts of the curriculum and to academic aspects of achievement, teaching to the test will actually be encouraged. The consequence will be the narrowing of the curriculum. In the long term, that will mean the lowering, not raising, of standards and the demotivating of many pupils.

The assessment of pupils' progress is important because it should encourage pupils to learn, inform teachers and pupils of progress, and provide feedback on achievement. If assessment becomes dominant—in other words, teaching to the test—curriculum aims are unlikely to be achieved. The effectiveness of a school is measured by what is taught in the whole curriculum and by the quality of life in that school.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman speaks with sincerity and knowledge about education, because he was a professional before he came to the House. However, I am a little confused by the drift of his argument. He said that, in his constituency, all the information that went out was known to parents, so there was no need to publish. Surely the need to publish a league table is obvious. The hon. Gentleman's constituents might think that they know which are the best schools and which are the worst schools in his constituency, but the league tables might show a different picture and might enable parents to make a positive, defined, sophisticated choice about the school to which they may want to send their children. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Steinberg: The hon. Gentleman does not understand league tables and the results of league tables. Parents know the performance of the school to which they send their children. Many of them would not have sent them there in the first place if they did not know how the school was performing. Many parents have no choice—it is the school within their area. Parents know how a school performs. They do not need league tables showing the top, bottom or middle. It is wrong to argue that league tables would give that information. I have already explained that league tables can be jiggled. They can be based on fewer results and on many other things. League tables do not give reliable information.

The Bill will do nothing for education. It is a further step in reducing standards in schools and lowering the morale of school teachers. We should have had a Bill that defined maximum class sizes and the minimum level of resourcing of books and equipment. Incidentally, the school that is top of the list according to *The Northern Echo* is using books that are 30 years old. It must scrimp and save and use books that are 30 years old.

We should have had a Bill that defined the minimum standards of provision of support staff, guaranteed standards for school buildings, and guaranteed provision of supply staff to cover for teacher absences. That would have been helpful for education. That would have helped to improve standards.

The only policies that will help all our children are those designed to limit class sizes, provide the books and equipment that are needed, and replace crumbling schools. The Government could have introduced a Bill that did just that, because that is what is needed. However, the Government gave us this Bill which, once again, will undermine the education service and teachers, and not help one iota to improve standards.

7.44 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): In supporting a very important measure for raising standards in schools over the next few years, I wish to refer to three points, two of which have already been mentioned. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) related an educational idyll of his constituency, and very impressive it was too. Educational standards in my hon. Friend's constituency have risen considerably over the past 12 years. However, that rise is not peculiar to his constituency. Spending per pupil has gone up by 40 per cent. over the past 12 years. We have already heard that the pupil-teacher ratio has also improved. Evidence shows a significant improvement—about a third—in the number of those who attain levels A to C in their GCSE results. There has been a significant improvement in the number of those attaining two or more A-levels. However, it must be said that there is improvement across the education spectrum.

I could take my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale to my constituency and show him a middle school which has spent £1 million on capital improvements over the past four years. I could take him to a secondary school in my constituency where the staying-on rate, which is a good index of educational achievement, has risen from 28 per cent. of the relevant age group to 55 per cent. over the past five years. Obviously, that success does not apply only to my constituency, where we have a relatively low-spending Conservative-controlled county council with, nevertheless, good examination results. It also applies to schools in inner-city areas. Over the past 12 years, great progress has been made under this Government in respect of educational standards and investment in education.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) said that we need no strictures from the Labour party on making education more parent-friendly. Here we have the Johnnies-come-lately who, when we were examining the Education Reform Act 1988 in Committee, opposed open enrolment which allowed parents to choose schools, certainly opposed the national curriculum because they thought that it was too centrist, and certainly did not like the idea of assessment. They now seem to think that they were all their own ideas all along and would like to adopt them with enthusiasm. I am absolutely certain that, in three years' time when we have another Conservative Government, Labour Members will still claim parentage of this measure, because they will then think that it will raise educational standards.

Thirdly, if we are to succeed in an economically competitive world in which technological advances are taking away the manual jobs that have been available for people who did not succeed at school, we have a duty to make sure that not only GCSE A to C achievers but every

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

pupil has a rigorous education and attains the necessary qualifications for a job. Staff at the employment training centres in my constituency say that the problem is that 40 per cent. of the people on their schemes have no basic education achievement, despite spending 11 years in the state school system. That is a fair cause for concern, at which the Bill is aimed.

A good education rests on a rigorous curriculum that is clearly understood, taught by well motivated teachers and has parents' support because they know what the curriculum is intended to achieve and what its results are likely to be.

The problem in Britain during the past 15 to 20 years has been that we have shied away from objective results in education. We have been too child-centred. We have not liked the idea of relative standards.

I can give an example of the problems that that attitude causes. I remember a parent coming to me about two years ago. She had just found out that her little nine-year-old, who had just gone into middle school, was two years behind on his reading age. I asked why she had not found out earlier. She said that she had asked the teachers and attended teacher sessions, but had been told that her son was fine. I asked whether she had received reports in the previous school. She said that she had never received any reports. Because that woman had no way of assessing what her child was doing, she had no idea of his achievement. The requirement in the Bill to publish results, including examination results, and provide written reports will help to alleviate that problem.

During the past 15 years, education has too often not been regarded as a body of knowledge to be imparted from teacher to pupils in an objective way. That was well put by Dr. Anthony Daniels earlier this year:

"There was a supposedly libertarian revulsion against 'bourgeois' standards of grammatical language: . . . That two and two make four is considered an intolerable insult to human freedom."

He says that the trouble is:

"scores are the young people I have encountered who left employment after a few days, simply because, on their own admission, they could not endure taking orders. They have never known what it is patiently to grow in skill and knowledge. They have been taught that what they already know and do is 'equally valid'."

That is the result of too great an adherence to a subjective, child-centred theory of education. The results are obvious.

Although at the top end of the scale more people than ever go to university—280,000 additional students every year in the past 12 years—a quarter of our seven-year-olds cannot give the result of the sum three multiplied by 10p plus four multiplied by 1p. Just in case anyone does not know, the answer is 34p.

The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales shows that too many of our seven-year-olds cannot achieve a satisfactory standard of reading. *[Interruption.]* I am referring to education methods. The bottom range of ability in the population is often affected by the lack of rigour in the education system.

Just as the Education Reform Act 1988 led, as Robin Wilson, the headmaster of Trinity school said recently in *The Times Educational Supplement*, to a phenomenally rapid and healthy change in schools, so the Bill will be crucial in bringing about improved standards in the classroom.

We have heard much debate tonight about whether the data on a school's performance should be given on a raw basis or a value-added basis. The reason why I support using raw data is not practical but philosophical. Through my associations with schools, I have found that if one concentrates on value-added data and takes into account what pupils knew when they entered a school, too often their basic education problems are obscured. Too often it institutionalises low achievement and therefore leads to unreasonably low expectations among teachers for the pupils whom they teach. That produces a downward educational spiral which it is difficult to stop.

For a long time I have been associated with a school called Perry Common, which is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). It is true that no less than 40 per cent. of the entry at age 11 have some special educational needs. I do not know whether that is due to their basic level of ability, poor teaching in the previous school or whatever. The problem is that because teachers know that, they have a disincentive to aim for the highest possible standard among the children they teach. That is not to say that the teachers are unprofessional. They are a good lot, but their standards and expectations are lower than they otherwise would be.

We did some interviews recently for a new head teacher. There were 40 applicants from all over Britain, of whom we interviewed 10. It was significant that all 10 spoke about the low expectations that teachers at the school seemed to have of pupils. The publication of raw data will act as an antidote to that problem and maintain the highest expectations. However, that does not mean that I am in complete agreement with what the Bill proposes should be published. In some schools BTEC is an important part of the curriculum, and the Government should consider whether those results should be published too.

Mr. Morley: The hon. Gentleman says that he has reservations about the publication of raw data, although they seem to me to be limited. Will he take into consideration the fact that there is great danger in publishing league tables produced on the basis of raw data? Unless the method by which data are compiled is taken into account, schools will discourage borderline pupils from sitting examinations. If the school ensures that its best pupils go in for exams, it will have a higher percentage pass rate. In a league table, that factor may hide a poorly performing school. It might look good in a league table, but the school could be under-achieving. How would it improve teachers' expectations if pupils of average ability were discouraged from sitting examinations?

Mr. Coombs: There is a variety of answers to that question. The main one is that I have more faith in the professionalism of teachers and their ambitions for their pupils than the hon. Gentleman appears to have. Most teachers want their children to improve and show what they can do in examinations. Therefore, teachers will enter pupils for examinations for which they think that the pupils are fit. That is why I argue that BTEC should be included in the examination results which the Bill requires schools to publish. Many schools do well in BTEC and do not lower standards or expectations as a result.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham was right to say that, under the Bill, there will be 6,000 inspections a

year rather than the measly 150 full inspections that have taken place in the past. My attitude to inspections in schools stems from my experience as chairman of schools in Birmingham for two years. I set up a working party on standards. It was sad that the Labour party did not want to co-operate in the working party, at least initially, because it felt that it might have to "put the finger", as it put it, on schools which were under-performing.

The problem with inspections in Birmingham was, first, that they were too rare to be of any real use. Full inspections, which will happen every four years under the Bill, happened every 20 years if one was lucky under the old system. The second problem was that the results of the inspections were rarely known outside the education department. They were not conveyed adequately to governors and if the governors received them, they were couched in such jargon that the governors could not take action on them.

Thirdly, the inspections were never discussed by the education committee—except when I became chairman and set up the working party. That is why we set it up. It is very sad that, when we lost power in 1984, the first thing that the Labour did was to abolish the standards working party, so the inspections were never discussed. The Bill requires the results of inspections to be made available to parents through governing bodies. Because of local management of schools, governing bodies will be able to do something about them, so inspections will be extremely valuable.

The reservations about inspections that have been expressed in the debate have not been objective and do not carry a great deal of weight. It appears that I have more faith in school governors than have many Opposition Members. School governors will be going for the best and most objective inspections, because that will add to the school's credibility. If inspections are sufficiently rigorous —with raw data or not—well motivated teachers, with good head teachers, will find that they are an incentive to improve standards in schools rather than the opposite.

I know of a school where only 6 per cent. of students passed the GCSE level with a grade between A and C. That is appalling. The national average is 30 per cent. Faced with those results, the teachers did not put their heads down and hope that the problem went away; they got stuck in. That proportion was built up to 12 per cent. in one year.

The Opposition have said that the publication of raw data will act as a disincentive, but, in most cases, it will act as a significant incentive for educational improvement.

Therefore, the Bill will give parents the knowledge that they need to become an effective part of the partnership between parent and teacher upon which all good education is based. As an extension of the parenthood charter, the Bill proves that the Government—through measures that they have already taken, such as open enrolment, local management of schools, greater control of governing bodies for parents and now through the publication of exam results, better school reports and better inspections —represent the party that takes parents' interests seriously. That is the way to better standards in education.

8.2 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): First, I shall discuss that part of the Bill which deals with testing and the publication of results. As I have made clear on the Floor of the House and in letters to Ministers, I am not opposed to testing, as long as it is done sensitively and used properly. I spent a considerable amount of time observing the testing of seven-year-olds in schools in my constituency. The tests were carefully designed and appropriate for seven-year-olds. By and large the youngsters seemed to be enjoying the tests immensely, and I felt that there was much advantage in them.

I was worried about the length of time that the tests were taking and the demands that they made of teachers because of the lack of additional classroom support. I am glad that that problem is being taken seriously.

I have been concerned about the way in which some of the test results have been used almost immediately in the political arena. Although I do not wish to focus wholly on the testing of seven-year-olds, the way in which those tests have been used has much relevance for how we use testing in general. I was worried about the dramatic announcement that 25 per cent. of seven-year-olds are illiterate and about the equally dramatic announcement by the Opposition spokesman. The Opposition were castigating lack of resources and the Government were implying that teaching methods left much to be desired. That may be the case, but it is certainly not proven. It is not fair to children or to teachers to dismiss 25 per cent. of seven-year-olds as illiterate.

The important thing is that both young children and those in secondary schools are on a learning curve and are making progress. Many children, who were only six when they took the test and were perhaps on the brink of achieving that, would be illiterate according to those criteria.

My son is six and will be taking the tests in the coming year. I have observed his reading progress. As with walking, talking and many other developments, children often make steady progress followed by a great surge. My six-and-a-half-year-old would just about pass that test now, whereas two months ago he would not. What matters is not where he was on the day he took the test, but the fact that he is making steady progress and can be expected to read confidently and with comprehension in the next year or so. That is the important thing and that is what must be addressed. Dismissing children as illiterate because of a fixed test on one day is a great mistake.

Crude league tables, based on raw data, have a number of major disadvantages. I have listened carefully to Conservative Members' arguments that such tables are effective and valuable. One hon. Member said that as much information as possible should be given to parents, not partial information. That information should include some idea of the standard of the child to start with—it is not merely a question of ensuring that results are assesed fairly and meaningfully—as that is important for parents of children with certain qualities when they decide where to send their child.

When I was considering the choice of school for one of my children, who was assessed as band 2 under the local education authority system, I looked at the league tables differently. I was interested to know which school in my area did well with band 2 children—at which schools such children went on to achieve. I chose the school with those criteria in mind and I have not been disappointed.

The results of the different schools were interesting. In many schools in my area, comparing intake with GCSE results and subsequently A-level results, band 1 children went on to do remarkably well, but band 2 and 3 children

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disappeared without trace. I was not interested in those schools. I wanted a school where band 2 children were achieving, expectations were high and they were making progress. That is an important consideration.

Parents of children with special needs need to know where they will be well catered for. That may never show up on the sort of league tables that we are talking about.

There is a danger that the Bill will encourage some schools, although certainly not all, to be rigorous in excluding pupils who they think might have a downgrading effect on their league tables, or that schools might discourage children with only a marginal chance of succeeding in an examination, not allowing them to take it because it will depress the school's results. That is not pie in the sky. In my area, two comprehensive schools have been vying in the local popularity stakes for some time. Although it is going back a considerable time, when the results of one school were analysed on the same basis as the results of the other it became clear that the school had presented its statistics in a misleading way. It also became clear that the numbers of pupils allowed to take some exams were different. That is of particular importance.

Falling standards and substandard school performance must be identified and tackled. The raw data will not necessarily give that information. We are looking not for raw results or a fixed result, but for progress, development and what schools have achieved with the pupils in their area. I hope that the Government will think again before deciding to publish raw data without any additional information. I recognise that we could get into a confusion of innumerable value-added dimensions, but there must be a balance between sensible, additional information on which to make an informed judgment and obscuring the important results.

The inspectorate has proved to be a critical aspect of the debate. Before the Government's proposals on how the inspectorate might operate in future, there seemed to be general agreement that inspectors were trusted and respected and had integrity and objectivity. So far as I can gather, the only criticism of inspectors is that there are not enough of them, so they cannot produce as many thorough, formal reports as desirable. Their advice to Ministers and schools has generally been accepted as invaluable and of the highest calibre. I fail to see how the new system can be an improvement on that.

Schools are to employ an inspecting agency. Educational consultants will vie to be chosen for that task. Those people, living in the real world of the free market, of competition, failed businesses and bankruptcies, as human beings, will look for renewed contracts and recommendations to other schools that they are the sort of inspecting agency with which a school likes to deal. There may not be consistency, but that anxiety pales into insignificance beside the considerable worry that the new system will be fraught with temptation to load, flatter or mislead in presenting a report. Obviously, word will go round that certain agencies are particularly critical and venomous while others are softer and gentler. That is what will happen in the real world, and we must resist it at all costs.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said that governors would exercise far more sense and, given a level playing field, I am sure that they would. But governors, too, will be making decisions in a tough climate. Many of them face critical financial decisions. No more than a couple of weeks ago, I had a letter from the parent governors of one of my children's schools about opening a special fund to make good the shortfall in the main budget. The school is in Lewisham which, the Minister will be aware, has particular financial problems, so perhaps it is not entirely typical. Nevertheless, governors who have to perform a difficult juggling act to make ends meet and who are looking for some approval for their decisions may be unduly biased.

Nobody can fail to agree with some of the Government's recommendations. At present, two out of five local education authorities do not systematically inspect and seven out of 10 do not publish results. We all know of the extraordinary inspection frequency, which results from the present level of the inspectorate, of a 200-year cycle for infant schools and a 60-year cycle for secondary schools. That is nonsense. Any intention to make formal inspection a four-yearly event must be right and must be applauded. There is no argument about that.

There is argument about who should carry out the inspection and who is best suited to it. I believe that a bolstered, more independent HMI would be the best vehicle. We understand from the review that we can read about only in leaked reports to *The Independent* that

"a number of head teachers and principals to whom we spoke said that the characteristics of independence, objectivity and breadth of experience . . . were best exemplified by HMI."

If that is the case, I fail to see why we are lurching off at a tangent and appointing a separate set of bodies which may lack consistency to do this vital job.

I do not share some of the anxieties raised by Opposition Members about lay members of inspectorates. Education must be examined by people other than simply the providers. It is easy to get too immersed in education practice and too involved in one's own educational philosophy to make an objective assessment of what is happening in a given school. I do not object to a degree of laymen representation, but I have great anxieties about the changes in the Bill.

We are told that the idea of expanding HMI has been dismissed because, it is claimed, the inspectorate could not deal with the 8,000 school assessments each year. Yet, paradoxically, we understand that it will be able to monitor those 8,000 inspections by other inspections teams each year. That seems extraordinary and something of a duplication of tasks. The lack of logic in that must be apparent to all. We can only plead that the necessary resources for it to conduct those 8,000 reviews a year will be made available. That is the only safeguard in the current form of the proposals against the possibly skewed results from inspection teams with a natural eye on their future commissions and business viability.

All the inspection in the world, however perfectly done, is academic, as is testing, if there are no means of following up the recommendations, tackling the weaknesses or making good any shortfalls. A few months ago, a constituent came to see me with a boy of 14 who could not read. She was a working-class mother who had been worried about that since she had become aware of his reading problem when he was seven. Each year various schools and teachers told her, "We'll give it another year and see how it goes." Now he is 14 and still cannot read. If problems relating to particular teachers or pupils are

identified within schools or in subject areas within schools, they must be dealt with. Otherwise, the whole exercise is simply academic.

We recognise that there are shortfalls in the educational system relating to nursery provision, special needs provision and the number of educational psychologists in post. There are also teacher shortages in certain subjects and in certain geographical areas where teachers are unwilling to apply for vacancies. Without tackling those fundamental problems, the rest of our debate will be of little value towards improving standards in our schools.

The shortcomings appear to have been diagnosed only recently and I fear that there is a tendency to go for alternative forms of educational practice that may be no more tried and tested than those which we are leaving behind. There has been a lurch back to the blackboard style of teaching, with all children facing the same direction, having the same lesson at the same time. That change, together with the abolition of project work in schools, is a dangerous move and must be resisted. Education does not have to be miserable to be effective. A good teacher can make education enjoyable and effective.

I was alarmed to hear one Conservative Member say that education had become too child-centred. What an extraordinary statement. I accept that we must look to the outside world and the end product as well as considering what the child experiences during his school years. However, to be effective, education must be child-centred. I accept that some education has been ideologically based and I do not defend that. However, when pupils work according to their own ability, in different ways and on different subjects in the same classroom, that is extremely effective—as long as the teacher is good.

I have said on many occasions, and no doubt I shall do so many times again, that education depends on good teachers who are well motivated and well paid. They must enjoy the right status and they must feel that they are regarded with considerable esteem by society. That is not the case now.

A small number of teachers caused a great deal of misery for the rest of the profession when they lurched into industrial action in the 1980s. My older son, who is 18, suffered three years of disruption to his secondary education because of that industrial action. I recognise that many of his friends from less fortunate backgrounds have never recovered. They do not have the type of parents who can pick up the pieces and who can say, "Have another year or two at school to make good." Those children have been failed for life by those three years of industrial action, and I do not defend it. However, I hope that the pay review body will redress the imbalance in teachers' pay and that marked improvements will occur.

I conclude by repeating an anecdote that I recently heard at a prize-giving day in a school in my constituency. The headmaster told us about a school in America where the results were extremely poor. Its headmaster decided that something had to be done, so he selected a group of pupils and a group of teachers. He told them that they were earmarked for special achievement, he gave them extra resources and extra study time. The expectation that they would do well was evident to all. The pupils went on to do very well in their subsequent examinations and everyone was pleased.

The teachers held a small party to celebrate and, after the pupils had left, the headmaster said, "You must realise that I did not select those pupils according to any particular criteria. They were selected at random from the rest of the pupils." When the teachers heard that, they congratulated themselves wholeheartedly and said, "Well, we did extremely well if you did not pick the best to achieve those results." The headmaster replied, "Well, you were not selected either as especially good teachers. You were selected at random from the teaching staff."

That story shows what can be achieved when the expectations of teachers and pupils are high. As the education debate proceeds, we must examine each issue according to such expectations.

8.24 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate. As someone who came through the state school system and benefited from the investment that previous taxpayers spent on our schools, I believe that it is vital that today's children and their parents get value for money from the present state school system.

I believe passionately in the state school system, and I want the very best for our children and our country. A great deal of work is done in our schools, and we must not underestimate it. However, there are also many problems. Despite the vast increases in expenditure on education in real terms recently, the public are not satisfied with the performance of our schools. Pupils are dissatisfied, and industry and commerce remain somewhat dismayed at the results from our schools. Therefore, something must be done.

In the past few years, the Government have introduced a number of beneficial educational reforms, which will definitely improve matters. I believe that the Bill continues that process. It should and will be welcomed by the vast majority of people, and it proves that the Government are continuing their endeavours to improve our schools and our education system.

The Conservative party believes in choice and opportunity for people in terms of how they spend their money and their time. We believe in providing people with the opportunity to utilise their talents to the full. Education is a passport to a full and fulfilling life. However, in some schools, in some areas, many children are being denied that passport. That is unacceptable to the Conservative party, and further action must be taken to improve the situation. I am sure that the Bill will improve the standard and quality of educational provision.

I must preface my remarks about school performance by stating that school provision in general is extremely good in my borough of Bexley. We have a varied mixture of good schools—grammar, technical, comprehensive and single sex. We also have a bilateral school in Erith in my constituency. Therefore, parents in my area have a true choice. I admit that our schools are so good that parents from neighbouring boroughs such as Greenwich, Lewisham and Bromley want to send children to our schools in Bexley. My hon. Friend the Minister knows only too well that that desire has caused concern to parents in Bexley. We have urged him to legislate to reverse the Greenwich judgment, so that priority is again given to children of our borough.

Although I welcome the Bill, I fear that publication of performance tables could make our problems in Bexley worse. Unless the Greenwich judgment is overturned, parents in Greenwich and other neighbouring boroughs

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—once they see how good and how well our schools perform—will be even more enthusiastic in their attempts to get places in Bexley schools. That would be detrimental to children in my constituency, unfair to parents and unacceptable to me. I hope that the Minister will note that.

On a positive note, I welcome the fact that schools will have to disclose their GCSE and A-level results. That is a big step forward, because parents will then be able to use examination results to challenge schools to improve. The educational establishment likes to keep up an old-fashioned mystique on such matters, and I believe that that establishment is one of the problems we face. It believes that it knows best and what is good for us and for our children. It believes that it alone can analyse, comment and advise.

It is amazing how dominant the educational establishment has been for so long, which is totally unacceptable. Today the Opposition revealed themselves as dinosaurs because they acted as mere apologists for the old established order.

Just as the old order has fallen in eastern Europe, so it is falling in educational establishment circles in Britain. There is a new mood afoot. Parents will no longer accept being fobbed off by the so-called experts. After all, parents are concerned about their children. They have a right in today's society to as much information as is available.

Let us remember that parents are making choices about their children and their future. They want to know how school examination results compare, about the level of truancy and about the staying-on rate after 16. Many parents also want to know what pupils do and where they go after leaving school—how many go into further education, to university or into employment.

The facts that will now be provided will give parents the missing information which will allow them to judge a school overall. Good schools will have nothing to fear. Weak schools will be encouraged to improve. Children and education will be the winners. The idea that information should be hidden from or denied to parents, as apparently advocated today by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and the Labour party, is amazing. It is also insulting to parents.

Mr. Straw *rose*—

Mr. Evennett: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman shortly. He spoke for a long time.

Most parents of children at poorer schools already know about those schools, though they do not have the information to confront the governors, teachers and heads to urge them of the need to improve the school.

Mr. Straw: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will look at the *Official Report* tomorrow and tell me where I said that information should be hidden from parents. At no stage did I say that, nor do we believe it.

Mr. Evennett: The hon. Gentleman implied it in what he said during his very long speech.

Parents need more information about their children. The jargon, the mystique and the experts have dominated in the recent past. As a public service, schools should provide each year a written report on each child's progress. That would be helpful to parents in the task of continuing their children's education at home. Opposition Members seem constantly to forget that parents, not teachers, are the primary educators of children. The teacher is the professional, so the teacher should report on the child's progress. The aim must be to help the child and keep the parents fully informed and advised. That is why the reports will be most helpful.

Inspection has come in for much discussion today as a major part of the Bill. Inspection in schools must be considered a vital part of the education system. It is essential if we are to know how schools, teachers and pupils are progressing, highlighting areas of concern and problems, while praising and congratulating areas where good practice and work is being carried out. A radical reform of HMI is long overdue.

As a former teacher with a wife who is a teacher, and as one who was a school governor throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, I have always been surprised and disappointed at the way in which most schools are infrequently inspected. Educational fashions change. Over the years, teaching fashions have changed and have become less formal. The results were often not good, yet only in a few severe cases did HMI go in and make an impact with its report.

Investigations are not meant to condemn but to evaluate, suggest and recommend. Yet with such infrequent investigations, there is often considerable disadvantage for the schools and the children. Four-yearly inspections must be good news; I warmly welcome that part of the Bill.

A result of the Government's proposals will be more inspections and reports. HMI will still have a vital role to play, despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn. Indeed, it will have an enhanced role. It will have a new independent statutory role, not only to inspect and produce reports, as now, but to advise and monitor the new system for schools with delegated budgets.

There will, of course, continue to be local council inspectors to inspect schools without delegated budgets. Regrettably, over the years local inspections have varied widely in quality, for many reasons. But to the Labour party, it seems that the solution always lies in having more ex-teachers, more ex-educationists and more establishment figures who alone, Labour thinks, are capable of doing the necessary inspections in our schools.

I find that view absolutely amazing. We need a breath of fresh air in school inspections. We must look at the standards and work in schools from an objective standpoint, and that should involve some outsiders, which means non-educationists, looking, inspecting and reporting. As I say, we must introduce a breath of fresh air into the inspection system. So long as HMI monitor and control the standards of the inspections, the changes proposed will bring many positive benefits. The most important will be better education provision for our children and the nation.

During the last five years, we have highlighted the problems and brought forward many reforms in the schools system, to the benefit of education and the children. It is vital that our children have the best possible education to allow them not only to have the best possible standard of life and maximise their opportunities, but for the benefit of Britain, so that we can compete in the world in trade and industry.

We must not simply retain the old-fashioned, traditional ways. It is clear from the remarks of Labour Members that they do not like change, even though they

have no ideas about what should be done to improve the education system. They are mere apologists for the existing system. They believe that it will be fine so long as more money is put into it. That is clearly not the solution to the problems of education in Britain. Over the years, more money has been put into education, but regrettably in certain areas little has been achieved. More money was spent in ILEA than in any other authority, yet the results were a disaster.

A basic amount of money must be provided, and the Conservatives have put more money than ever in real terms into education. We need an improved education system, and the Bill will go a long way to achieving that for the benefit of our children.

8.36 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): It is said that those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad, and it is clear that Tory Ministers are mad. If they seriously believe that in the context of the present constitutional crisis between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom they can introduce what are crude and dangerous league tables into Scottish education—and do so by means of a single clause tacked on at the end of an English and Welsh Bill which is otherwise wholly irrelevant to Scotland—they have taken leave of their collective senses. They will have to pay a further political price for their insensitive treatment of Scotland.

Some hon. Members believe that the Tories have got themselves into a spot of bother in Scotland, and we are not referring to the occasional by-election disaster such as occurred in Kincardine and Deeside recently, or even to the reduction of Scottish Tory representation in the House to the completely inadequate level of nine. We are talking about a spectacular slide in support for Conservatism in Scotland, which has taken the Tories from the high point of being the majority party in Scotland in the mid-1950s to the point today when they are on the edge of extinction as a serious and significant force in Scotland.

One might think that, in those circumstances, Ministers would begin to ask themselves a few basic questions, such as, "Where have we gone wrong in Scotland? What are we doing or not doing in Scotland that is alienating from us our natural Scottish supporters?" It is not for me to help Scottish Tories in those circumstances, but I suggest to them that it may have something to do with the way in which the Government treat Scotland in legislative terms. The Government treat Scotland as an afterthought and something to be tacked on at the end when the serious business has already been dealt with.

I can imagine the scenario that must have taken place before the Bill was introduced. A team of Education Ministers will have been locked up together for days or even weeks on end to thrash out the details of the Bill. They will have gone into detail about Her Majesty's inspectorate for England and for Wales and about the powers of the chief inspector for England and for Wales. They will have discussed the supply of information for grant-maintained, state and private schools in England and Wales. Then, just when they thought that they had finished and were about to leave the room, up pipes a small Scottish voice in the corner which says, "What about Scotland?" The Government had forgotten all about Scotland.

The Secretary of State was so ignorant that he believed that the Bill applied to Scotland. He was unaware that 20 of the 21 clauses and all the schedules had nothing to do with Scotland. In answer to a question from me, he suggested that the Bill affected all areas of the United Kingdom in the same way, with additional provision for Scotland in clause 17. He appeared to be completely at sea again when I asked why primary schools in Scotland were excluded from the Bill, and did not seem to know that Scottish primary schools had been excluded.

It is contemptible for a Government to behave in that way about an important and constituent part of the United Kingdom. They treat Scotland as no more than a mere appendage of England, and seek to impose on Scotland an educational agenda that is irrelevant to the real needs of Scottish education. Indeed, the Bill is aimed primarily at England, rather than at England and Wales.

The Bill is contemptible in practical terms because, when it is debated in Committee, there may be only one Scottish Member on the Committee. The Labour party will ensure that Scottish Labour Members are represented, but will the Government ensure that there is Scottish representation in the Conservative party? The Minister of State, Scottish Office was present during the opening speeches of this debate but he has since disappeared and has not returned since. Nor is he likely to wind up the debate as I understand that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), or some other English Minister will do so.

In any case, a concurrent Bill will involve the Scottish Office Minister, so there is unlikely to be a Scottish Minister in the Committee. There are unlikely to be any Scottish Conservative Back Benchers either, not only because there are so few of them but because none of them has participated in this debate, apart from a brief intervention by the hon. and learned member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) that could hardly have been described as serious participation.

Mr. Straw: He was drunk.

Mr. McAllion: He may have been drunk, but his participation was not serious.

A Scottish Labour Member could find himself isolated on the Committee and virtually speaking to the walls of the Committee Room, because he will get no reasonable or logical answers from Ministers who have no responsibility for Scottish education and will be unable to deal with the criticisms and questions which that Labour Member may raise.

For the House to deal with Scotland in that manner shows nothing but contempt for Scotland and the Scottish people. Clause 17 should be dealt with separately, if not by a Bill in its own right then at least by the Scottish Grand Committee, which should sit separately to consider clause 17, as it applies only to our country. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will apply for an early sitting of the Scottish Grand Committee to deal with clause 17. He will have the support not only of Labour Members but of all Scottish Members who are genuinely concerned about Scottish education and keen to see it debated properly in the House.

Like Scottish plays, Scottish clauses will become famous in Westminster and a Scottish clause will now be added to every Bill to deal with Scotland as an afterthought. Clause 17 provides for the publication of

[Mr. McAllion]

crude league tables showing exam results, truancy rates and the destination of pupils once they have left school in Scotland. Ministers claim that the clause is designed simply to convey more information to parents and give parents a choice about the educational future of their children. That is so much bunkum, as every Labour Member knows. The tables are designed to exclude from comparison all the factors that influence examination results, particularly the social class make-up of a school.

It has long been known in education circles that a clear correlation exists between social class background and examination success. League tables that do not take that correlation into consideration distort reality and are inaccurate. The league tables published under the Bill will distort and be inaccurate and, to that extent, they will be useless as a guide to parents on how to choose a school.

Much more important is the use to which those league tables will be put. Parents will naturally clamour to get their kids into schools at the top of the performance tables. Those schools will then be in the fortunate position of being able to pick and choose between applicants. They will be aware that the reason for their educational success in the first place was the high proportion of their intake coming from social classes 1 and 2. Therefore, they will be predisposed to choose applicants from those social classes, thereby reinforcing their examination success and leading them on to greater success than ever.

The Bill will reinforce the marked differences that now exist between schools in terms of the social class make-up of school populations. Successful schools will have a higher proportion of pupils from social classes 1 and 2. Pupil rolls will be full to bursting and staff will be of the highest standard because of the large school rolls. Additional pupils bring additional resources, which will create yet more success.

The other schools will have fewer pupils from social classes 1 and 2. Fewer pupils will attend the schools and they will thus have fewer teachers. The schools will have fewer resources and a narrower range of subject options and, as a result, their relative failure will be reinforced. The old senior-secondary and junior-secondary divide will be re-established in Scotland, like the old grammar-secondary modern divide that used to exist in England and Wales. Tory Governments have always been about creating a two-tier educational system.

Mr. Pawsey *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head in disagreement. I refer him to a pamphlet that was published in the mid-1980s by an obscure group of Back-Bench MPs called the No Turning Back group. The pamphlet was called "Save our Schools" and its authors included the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who is now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), who is now the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who is Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is the Scottish Office education spokesman, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who is now at the Department of Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), who is sitting on the Front Bench now, and the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), who is now a junior Transport Minister.

The pamphlet described the system of comprehensive education under local education authority control as a "monolithic system" that was impervious and insensitive to parents. It said that it was an impossible system, inside which able teachers had become imprisoned—a system that thwarted those who genuinely care about pupils and education. It referred disparagingly to "comprehensive conformity" and bemoaned the departure of grammar schools, which it described as having taught rigorously, maintained discipline and specialised in the production of excellence.

That was the attitude of those hon. Members when they were obscure Back Benchers and I am convinced that it remains their attitude now that they are Ministers at the very heart of the Government.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. May we return to his attitude? Is he arguing —as he seemed to be before he lurched off into the quotation—that no examination result should be made available to Scottish parents? Is that the position of the Scottish Labour party as distinct from the English Labour party?

Mr. McAllion: The Minister is naturally anxious to get me off the subject of the "Save our Schools" campaign, the No Turning Back group and his views on comprehensive education. I shall answer his question directly: we do not believe that the information should be denied to parents, but we believe that crude performance tables should not be used to distort the choices that parents make between different schools in Scotland, as would be the case if the Bill were implemented. The Minister's attitude reveals a clear determination to break up the system of comprehensive education in this country and replace it with something different.

When one of the Scottish education Bills was in Committee earlier this year and the Minister of State, Scottish Office—who is no longer present—was leading for the Government, he said that the Tory party was the revolutionary party of Scotland. The Secretary of State for Education and Science echoed those sentiments today when he referred to the Labour party as the conservative party with a small "c", and to the Conservative party as the truly radical revolutionary party. It did not seem to matter to him that the last right winger to claim to be a revolutionary in European history was Adolf Hitler. The Conservative party has taken on the mantle of right-wing revolutionaries.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Too subtle.

Mr. McAllion: It may be too subtle, but it may be too true.

All those years ago, the right-wing revolutionaries sketched out in their pamphlet a series of three critical reforms that they said would dismantle the comprehensive education system, all of which the Government have implemented in their legislation. First, there was to be the creation of a new sort of school. In Scotland it is called the self-governing school; I do not know what it is called in England and Wales. Secondly, there was to be direct funding of those schools by central Government, which would not only free them from local education control, but

allow the Government to favour them over schools that remained under local education authority control. Thirdly, there was to be the creation of an internal education market through the publication of examination results to allow parents to choose between schools and decide, through the marketplace, which schools would survive and which would fail.

Unfortunately for the Minister and his friends, the revolution never got off the ground in Scotland. I served on the Committee that considered the Bill on school boards which was introduced in the first year of this Parliament. At the time, great claims were made about the Bill. It was said that it would lead to tremendous parental power and parental involvement in education, but it ended in disarray. There was widespread apathy at this year's elections to school boards in Scotland. In parts of Scotland such as Grampian, up to 40 per cent. of schools received no parental nominations to their boards because parents did not want to be involved in what was essentially a foreign idea imposed on them by a Government based in Westminster.

The second stage of the revolution involved a Bill to introduce self-governing schools. I remember that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), now Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, was confident about the Bill's implications. In Committee he framed what he called the "Gainsborough question" asking how many schools in Scotland would opt out. He kept demanding that question of the Labour spokesmen because he was confident that, under the legislation, plenty of schools in Scotland would opt out.

So confident were Ministers that the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for education authorised the expenditure of £12,510 to produce 12,000 copies of a booklet on how to become a self-governing school, but that money, time and effort were wasted because not one school in Scotland has opted out. The Under-Secretary of State has the answer to his question, as do the Government. Scotland is not interested in opting out of local education authority control.

The Bill relates to the third of the critical reforms: the publication of league tables to allow schools to be set against schools, and the operation of the internal education market. It forms the third part of what was initially a three-part revolution. However, as the first two parts of the revolution have collapsed in disarray in Scotland, it can hardly be argued that it is necessary to impose the third part of the revolution on a country which simply does not want it.

Publication of primary school examination results in Scotland have been excluded from the Bill. Reform of the inspectorate, which formed a large part of tonight's debate, is also excluded from Scotland. The self-governing schools reforms have fallen flat on their face in Scotland. School boards in Scotland have been increasingly ignored by uninterested parents. The last thing that we need now is the importation of an English idea that we in Scotland do not want to know about.

It is time that the true education agenda was addressed in Scotland—the lack of statutory nursery provision, which exists not only in Scotland, but elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the crumbling buildings in which too many of our children in Scotland have to receive their education, the chronic underfunding of equipment and materials in Scottish schools and the oversized and composite classes. All those problems must be tackled by a Government who genuinely support the system of education in Scotland. This Government do not, but the next Government will, because it will be a Labour Government.

8.56 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I have listened with great care to all the speeches in today's debate and have concluded that the Bill is better than I thought it was when I entered the Chamber. It is an excellent Bill which, outside the House, will be seen as a measure of great common sense and a necessary and important addition to the education reforms that the Government have already implemented.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), although he made a good debating speech, showed that he did not oppose much of the Bill. He reserved his strongest attack for the level of the Government's education advertising budget. However, it is clear that, apart from a good bit of 1960s stuff from the Opposition and a truly unrevised speech from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor)—who demonstrated that he is a genuine socialist—opposition to the measure is pretty thin.

I have a specific reason for welcoming tonight's measure. In March, a number of my hon. Friends and I introduced a Bill on the publication of exam results in which the hon. Member for Blackburn was kind enough to take a small interest and to which he was not entirely opposed. The Bill was supported by many people, but, unfortunately, one Friday an Opposition Whip consigned it to oblivion by objecting to it. Today, the Government have brought back the entire contents of that Bill, about which I am delighted.

Since then, the support of the hon. Member for Blackburn for the principle of the Bill has increased. Recently, in a front-page interview in *The Guardian*, the hon. Gentleman was reported to have said:

"Let 1,000 league tables bloom",

thus demonstrating that he is not opposed in principle to the measures discussed tonight.

Two arguments are advanced against the league table principle. The first is that parents cannot be trusted to interpret the information satisfactorily. When we introduced our ten-minute Bill, I said that such attitudes were odiously patronising to the majority of parents, and everything that we have heard since supports that view. I do not think that parents want to hear excuses about the performance of schools: they want to see them reformed and made better to give greater opportunities to their children.

In a patronising letter to a local newspaper, Nottinghamshire education authority stated:

"Raw exam results unrefined for socio-economic factors give a false impression of performance."

That is absolute nonsense. Even in Albania, socialists no longer believe such rubbish.

The other argument advanced against league tables—it has been made tonight—is that they will do nothing to help sink schools. However, league tables will at least identify the depth of the difficulties of those schools which means that we can place much greater focus on them. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) makes an important point when he speaks about the Gujerati community in his constituency. That community does not have many inbuilt advantages, but

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

achieves well above average results. That demonstrates that there is little correlation between home background and intelligence.

Parents want objectivity and do not want subjective results that have been tampered with and to which socio-economic factors have been added. They do not want results that have been massaged to suggest that there is no such thing as a good or a bad school, just schools. Parents know perfectly well that that is not true. They also know from gossip at the school gate the subjective pluses and minuses in schools and are able to consider those in interpreting examination results. That enables them to see whether a school is good at art or music, to define its degree of community awareness and determine its emphasis on values and so on. Parents have a right to receive detailed information based on the objective results of schools. Such a measure was not dreamed up by the Conservative party. I responded to the wishes and representations of my constituents in Nottinghamshire and my ten-minute Bill received widespread and positive support.

I know that the Secretary of State has carefully considered the argument by the Audit Commission about added value. I accept his point that he does not want results tampered with and made more socio-economic but wants them raw. That is the right approach. However, I hope that he will accept that there is a powerful case for value-added information as a second stage. Value-added information will enable us to demonstrate the improvements in local schools that have been achieved one compared with another and also against the national average.

When the system envisaged in the Bill is up and running, I hope that the Secretary of State will seriously consider promoting, not necessarily through legislation, the concepts in the Audit Commission report. Such added-value information is important not only to parents but to teachers, because it will enable them to see how well they are doing.

I agree with the Secretary of State that the system of inspection envisaged in the Bill is a great improvement on the current system. Above all, this is a matter of management. Perhaps it is worth considering further a Bill presented some time ago which included a proposal for an education audit commission. The methodology of the Audit Commission and the way in which it subcontracts work and co-ordinates and polices proper assessment are important. The commission has a proven track record in this area and although it could not itself carry out the work that I have suggested, it provides some useful pointers to the way ahead.

Some hon. Members have spoken about "croneyism" between head teachers and inspectors—the fear that a school would tend to stick with a group of inspectors which produced a favourable report. It is incumbent on the Government to make clear in Committee why they believe that there are no grounds for such fears. They should at least quieten existing fears.

What we have so far heard about the new system of inspection does not make it sufficiently clear that it will give the necessary independence and will accept the purchaser-provider split that we have put in place in the national health service and the enabler-provider split in local government. There must be a clear differential so that inspections can be respected as impartial and accurate.

If the Secretary of State is not convinced by that argument, I urge him to accept the need for tight guidelines on inspection and a clearly defined code of practice, because such safeguards would make it clear that the fears that I have expressed would not materialise. The Secretary of State has spoken about the composition of the inspection teams. Those teams should be a healthy mix. There is bound to be a role for management consultant skills, to which the Audit Commission frequently refers, and for the value-for-money skills, which it has. I am sure that the mix of inspection teams envisaged by the Secretary of State is absolutely right.

The Bill undoubtedly extends choice and opportunity for parents. It builds on the changes that we have already made and on the citizens charter process. When the Prime Minister said recently that the trendies have had their say and their day, there were cheers in many houses all over the country as people welcomed what he had said. Schools and teachers must be more answerable to parents. I am delighted that the Government intend to publish truancy rates and school leavers' destinations, because such information will give a useful steer to parents. It is an excellent idea that lay assessors will now appear on appeals committees.

The process of schools opting out of LEA control will continue with remarkable intensity. Perhaps the Minister can say whether his Department will be able to cope with that flood after the election.

The Minister should also give a hearty vote of thanks to governors. On a recent—greatly appreciated—visit to my constituency, he spent the best part of the day with teachers and governors at two schools and met all six headmasters in the secondary sector. The teachers and the staff were delighted that he came, and it was noticeable that he listened to their concerns and was able to reassure practically all of them.

The correlation between spending and academic results shows that we have made enormous progress. It is not true that one needs to spend more money to get academic results. In Japan, the average 16-year-old reaches a standard in maths that is reached by only 2 per cent. of the equivalent pupils in this country, but the Japanese spend less per head on education than we do. Therefore, the problem is not necessarily one of money. Some of the highest-spending LEAs produce the worst results.

I welcome the Bill. It is an excellent step forward, although I have one or two reservations that we can discuss in Committee. I trust that it will rapidly reach the statute book.

9.5 pm

Mr. Eddie O'Hara (Knowsley, South): The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) spoke scathingly of experts, and I accept that it is as well to be sceptical in the face of experts. However, I remind Conservative Members of the saying of Werner Heisenberg: an expert is someone who knows what are the greatest mistakes that can be made in his specialism and, even more, knows how to avoid making them.

I have risen to speak against the Bill because I feel that it is pregnant with error. The most marked feature of the Government's management of the state education system

is the ever-whirling wheel of changes that are so frequent and frenetic that one could be forgiven for not being able to judge whether the result is change or progress. Perhaps the eye is meant to be deceived.

I shall deal with the proposed change in the inspection of schools through the reduction in numbers, and change in the role, of HMI. I regard this as a whimsical, wanton, rushed and misbegotten change. Her Majesty's inspectorate has a distinguished history in the service of state education. Its aim was set out when the first two inspectors were appointed in 1839. They were

"to carry on the inspection of schools and to convey to . . . teachers a knowledge of all improvements in the art of teaching."

They had also to convey to the Privy Council progress in education.

HMI has performed this dual role with distinction for more than one and a half centuries. It produced the classic handbook for teachers in 1905. It was involved in the great advances in pedagogy between the wars. It had an input into the policy for reconstruction of the education service after the second world war. In the 1970s, a Labour Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan, in his Ruskin speech, initiated the great debate in education and recognised the important role of HMI.

Her Majesty's inspectorate undertook a major report on primary and secondary schools in the 1970s and produced great pamphlets on the curriculum, such as the red book published on 16 November 1977. It carefully prepared the ground for more uniformity of provision. It prepared the way for the national curriculum with its notion of a common core of entitlement. It did all this alongside its inspection role, and it also protected standards.

I refer here not only to the role that HMI played in the payment-by-results system in the latter part of the 19th century—a system so detested by that great inspector, Matthew Arnold—but to the courageous stand taken by Senior Chief Inspector Sheila Brown in the early 1980s, when she insisted on reporting to the House the damaging effect on schools of cuts in funding. I am surprised that it has taken the Government, in this case, so long to shoot the messenger—a talent that they have.

It appears that HMI is to be reduced to a rump of 175, if I understand the Secretary of State correctly. I leave aside his coyness about the numbers recommended in the review which he apparently dare not lay before the House. It also appears that half that number will have the impossible task of monitoring the 6,000 inspections per annum which are to be carried out by the new breed of licensed inspectors. HMI's other task is to issue the licences and to produce national reports—so much for its great achievement and traditional role in the past 150 years. Why cannot the House be enlightened by the evidence and arguments of the review document to the effect that it is not a stultification of HMI's role? We have been told only that 175 is the best possible estimate of the acting senior chief of HMI, an internal temporary appointment of the Secretary of State.

The role of HMI as envisaged in the Bill is Mission Impossible. It would be ameliorated if the job of inspection were assigned to local education authority inspectors, as appears to have been envisaged in the late 1980s following the recommendations of, for example, the Taylor report and as chronicled in the important study by the Foundation for Education and Research in 1989 entitled, "The LEA Adviser—A Changing Role", which showed that more than three quarters of local authority advisers were already involved in inspection. There were reorganisations and reappointments all over the country and it seemed that the Government were prepared, through the local education authority training grants scheme, to put money into the training of local authority advisers to enable them to become more inspectoral in their role.

The Opposition could have lived with the trinity of a strong initiating HMI—as it has traditionally been—an education standards council and a strong local inspectorate. The Secretary of State referred to the LEA's system of inspecting schools for which it is responsible as a system designed to guarantee a failure to insist on adequate standards in schools. I leave aside the disgraceful insult to the integrity of local government inspectors and the fact that they are responsible to local government representatives, Conservative as well as Labour, but what evidence has the Secretary of State that the proposed system of licensed inspectors—a privatised system of inspection—offers a better guarantee?

It has been said that to ask for advice is nine times out of 10 to tout for flattery. The proposed system is an invitation to schools to buy flattery. Given that we presume the lowest common denominator of integrity, which is what the Secretary of State suggested with reference to local authority inspectors, what reliability can we expect in reports purchased in a competitive market? What guarantee can the Secretary of State offer that the relationship developed between schools and their hired inspectors will be any less cosy than that which he suggested would exist between schools and their parent LEAs?

Will the spirit of Miss Jean Brodie stalk the land? What assurance can be given that all pupils in the 6,000 schools will not be described as la creme de la creme? Reductio ad absurdum perhaps, but there is no more hyperbole in my criticism of the basis of a privatised system of inspection than in the Secretary of State's flippant dismissal of the LEA inspectorate.

I prefer to address my remarks not to the likely integrity of private inspectors or, indeed, of head teachers and governors, but to their ability to do the job. I leave aside the amazing criterion that each team must contain someone who knows nothing about education. There is no requirement that the teams should have any local knowledge. Is not that important to inform their judgment of the schools that they inspect? If a different team is parachuted in every four years, what guarantee is there that it will have any effect on the needs and development of the school?

The carousel of change does not represent progress; it is a change too far. In the words of Sean O'Casey, the Government are reducing education to a "state of chassis".

9.14 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I give total and unqualified support to the Bill. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) gave an account of the speech by Lord Callaghan, who was then Prime Minister, on 18 October 1976 at Ruskin college. It is true that his speech started the education debate, which was the good side of it. The bad side was that nothing was done by the Labour party between 1976 and the election of this Government in 1979.

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

Lord Callaghan made three points. The first concerned teaching methods, the second concerned standards and monitoring, and the third concerned education and industry. Under the second point, he raised the related issue of the proper role of the inspectorate and emphasised the need to find the best means of monitoring the use of resources to maintain a proper national standard of performance. The unease that Conservatives—and, I suspect, some Opposition Members—have today about the role of Her Majesty's inspectorate was shared by Lord Callaghan when he was Prime Minister. All of us, whichever party we represent in the House——

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: No, I will not give way, although I usually give way to the right hon. Gentleman because I have waited to speak and I have only four minutes. The right hon. Gentleman will understand that I must finish speaking at 9.20 pm.

Before I was so politely interrupted, I was about to say that Lord Callaghan made the point about the need for a refocusing of the inspectorate. We believe that the Bill will achieve that, although not in the way that the Labour party's proposals would do. The Labour party seems to imply that there was a golden age for the inspectorate. I suspect that, in 1966 and again in 1976, when circulars 10/66 and 10/76 were introduced by Labour, the inspectors were leaned on by Labour Education Ministers so that they would support the Government policies of the day.

During my time at the Department of Education and Science, I saw no record of protest by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools about the loss of the grammar schools to the British people. There was no golden age and no independence. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South referred to the time when Sheila Brown was senior chief inspector. The end of her time in the post overlapped with my first two years at the Department of Education and Science. I can remember no occasion on which a Conservative Secretary of State doctored, altered or refused to publish the report of the senior chief inspector. It has always been a matter of principle and of honour that the reports have gone forward.

What comes out of the debate tonight is that the Labour party's policies are the same as those in 1976. The Labour party still believes that the education service should be used as a means of social engineering. The Labour party still states that its fundamental objective is to establish a comprehensive system of education from nursery schools up to and beyond school leaving age.

Mr. Morley *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dunn: Labour Members nod. The Labour party criticises the publication of examination results because it believes that that will reinforce social division. In the future, it is likely to restate its long-term aim to eliminate all forms of variety and all forms of education apart from that provided by the state.

I note that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who chastised hon. Members for not being here, is now no longer here himself. He referred to the Conservative party's shortage of representation in Scotland. I would point out to the hon. Gentleman, and to Labour Members generally, that, in England, the Conservative party's majority over all the other parties combined is 200. That was true at the time of the 1987 election, and it will continue to be true. It is plain that, if the Conservative party's writ does not run in Scotland, the writ of the Labour party does not run in England.

I commend the Bill to the House, and I assume that it will attract the majority that it deserves.

9.20 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) finished his speech with an uncharacteristically churlish comment. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) had been here throughout our proceedings. He had spoken and had listened to the subsequent speech before nipping out of the Chamber for a few moments. My hon. Friend followed the normal conventions and was absolutely right to say that at no stage has a Scottish Conservative Member been willing to participate in the debate. We have seen today the sort of opposition that we can expect from Scottish Conservatives after the next election—non-existent.

The Bill supposedly enacts the parents charter, but there is one substantial omission from the parents charter: it makes no reference to the adequacy of resources for our education system. Not one Conservative Member has had the courage to argue about the adequacy of resources. No Opposition Member would say for one moment that the management of public resources is not important, but what we should like to hear from Conservative Members is a defence of the current inadequate level of resources allocated to our state education sytem.

Last week, we had four pieces of evidence——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: What does this have to do with the Bill?

Mr. Fatchett: The right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke for 61 minutes almost without referring to the Bill introduced by his own Government, so he can hardly criticise me in the first two minutes of my speech. If he would listen for a few minutes, he would realise that resources go to the heart of the quality of our education system. That is probably why the right hon. and learned Gentleman bought private education for his children while allowing the rest of us to have our children educated in a system that lacks resources.

In the past few days, four pieces of evidence have appeared. The first was a survey produced by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations telling us that parents are donating £75 million from their own pockets to provide schools with basics. We are not talking about luxury items; we are talking about basics such as the maintenance of schools buildings, decorating and the provision of an adequate supply of books. My hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) told us that a textbook that was used in his school is still there, a generation later. That is how up-to-date we are in our commitment to resources. My hon. Friend said that the book was still in good condition, and I suspect that that is because it was largely unused.

The second piece of evidence was a report about music from the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales—an organisation with an impeccable, objective record—saying:

"Children in deprived inner city areas are likely to find it particularly difficult to learn musical instruments as schools divert funds to what they see as more important needs".

The quality of our children's education is being undermined.

No wonder HMI is under attack. We were told by the inspectorate last week that schools had had difficulty in introducing the national curriculum. Some 85 per cent. of secondary schools reported difficulties because of the shortage of staff in specialist subjects, and the whole of the primary sector reported difficulties with primary technology and primary science. [HON. MEMBERS: "The Bill?"] All this relates to the parents charter.

On Monday, a survey by the National Union of Teachers referred to class size. We all heard the Secretary of State say on the "Today" programme that large classes do not matter and that they are not important to the quality of education. That is absolute rubbish. Why do Cabinet Ministers buy private education for their children? They do not want large classes; they want small classes and preferential treatment for their children. The parents charter does not refer to the adequacy of resources for our education system.

The Secretary of State said that this is the flagship Bill this Parliament for his education policies. I understand that it is the first flagship Bill where the captain will not serve on the Standing Committee. The captain has left the bridge before the Bill leaves the dockyard. That is typical of the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State said that he did not want to be confused by the data published about school performance. He said that many of the electorate do not understand such complicated issues. He went so far as to say that the issues that we are discussing today may be beyond the reach of the electorate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State's argument was patronising.

The Secretary of State may be interested in the figures. When questioned, 10 per cent. of the electorate recognised the term "HMI". When asked to identify a photograph of the man trying to run the education system—in other words, the Secretary of State—7 per cent. of the electorate recognised him. Perhaps that 7 per cent. should have been asked whether they understood what HMI stood for.

Opposition Members have presented a sensible and sound argument today. We have begun to persuade all Conservative Members, with the exception of the Secretary of State, that the so-called raw data is misleading, confusing and potentially damaging. There are many examples of that. If we publish the results of seven-plus assessment, what will happen in inner-city schools like those in my constituency? Are we going to make judgments about those schools when some of the youngsters do not have English as their first language and will have been in this country for only a short time? How are we to judge those data?

On the Government Benches, only the Secretary of State believes that we should not present more than the raw data. Several of my colleagues referred to special needs. If only crude raw data are published, schools will be reluctant to take on youngsters with special needs.

Mr. John Greenway: Rubbish.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman may say, "Rubbish," but what I have described is a fact of life, which is already happening under local management of schools because budgets make it difficult for head teachers to take on special needs youngsters. That is what will happen with the publication of league tables.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is aware that I have a personal interest in the problems of dyslexia. The Dyslexia Educational Trust has stated that, if we proceed with raw data,

"Such a measure would be to make head teachers and governing bodies unwilling to accept any child with a learning difficulty"

because of the effect on the local community and the judgments they would have to make because they would not appreciate problems like dyslexia. I am greatly concerned about that, but nothing seems to have been done about that problem.

Mr. Fatchett: My right hon. Friend's point has also been made by Deaf Accord and Mencap and a range of organisations representing youngsters with special needs of all kinds. If we adopt crude league tables, the needs of those youngsters will not be taken full account of.

Several of my colleagues reinforced the point that it is always possible to produce good league tables if a head teacher in a particular school limits entry to examinations. That is clear from the league tables published in the national press. We should be trying to persuade more youngsters, not fewer, to enter examinations, and more youngsters, not fewer, to push up standards instead of simply maintaining league tables.

I realise that the Minister of State has problems with his Secretary of State, but we must make sure that we invest in the notion of added value that the Audit Commission was talking about. We need that added value to judge the performance of a school. We need information that tells us about the quality of school life, and the availability of music, art, drama and sport in schools. All that is relevant to parents, but none of it has been discussed by any Conservative Member. All that is crucial in providing us with the necessary information.

The crucial aspect of the notion of league tables is that the Government are abdicating management of the education system and leaving its standards to the market. The Government's position assumes that each parent has equal and absolute freedom to move his or her child from one school to another. That is the thesis behind the publication of league tables—one moves one's child from the school with a poor record to another school, and then levers up standards by that process.

That might happen in the private sector, and it might happen for the children of Ministers, but for the vast majority of parents, that is not a proposition. As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, that is not a proposition for parents in Cornwall, because they relate to the neighbourhood school. They want the standards of the neighbourhood school to be improved.

Also, it is not a proposition for many inner-city schools. Many parents do not have the personal and financial resources to shop around and move from one school to another. That is why the proposal to privatise the inspectorate means that the Government have abdicated their responsibility for the general improvement of standards. It means that the Government have decided that they are concerned not with opportunity but with the

[Mr. Fatchett]

education of a few. That outdated philosophy will leave Britain unable to compete economically and educationally in the 21st century.

The proposal to privatise will lower standards and will be expensive, but the real reason for the proposal to privatise the inspectorate comes from the Government's vendetta against the inspectorate. My hon. Friends the Members for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said that, time after time, the Government have been embarrassed by the reports of Her Majesty's inspectorate. It is typical of the Conservative party that, faced with criticism and embarrassment, it does not take up the arguments: it simply wipes out the source of the embarrassment. That is the reason for privatisation.

That applies to what the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), said in criticism of the educational establishment. I fear that he will regret the phrase if he is looking for promotion, but he referred to the educational establishment as "men in suede shoes". The only difference is that we have replaced one pair of suede shoes with another, and the latter pair carries a series of prejudices with it.

There is concern about standards, because this is the first time that we have a system embedded in law which states that the people who are to carry out a particular task will be best qualified for it if they have no skill whatsoever. That job advertisement states, "Apply if you have no ability in this matter." It is like advertising a job for a long-distance lorry driver and saying that the best qualification is not to be able to drive a car or lorry of any description.

It is a peculiar notion of the Government that people who are to make professional judgments of others are to be without expertise. The point is even deeper than that, because the choice will be made by governors and by head teachers. The system will be incestuous, because it will enable reports to be produced which are satisfactory and which reflect well on schools. That is not to question the integrity of those who become inspectors.

But what will happen? Let us say that, after the next election, the hon. Member for Dartford has some spare time on his hands and chairs a school governing body. He has various views about the education system.

Mr. Straw: He might be an inspector.

Mr. Fatchett: As my hon. Friend says, the hon. Gentleman could offer his views as an inspector. He would certainly qualify as someone with little or no expertise—that is clear from his record as a Minister. He may go to a school and say that he had a particular view of the education system. Will not school governing bodies and head teachers ask for a report from that inspection team to ensure that their work is reinforced?

For the sake of an ideological belief in the market and privatisation, the Government are getting rid of a system that has maintained standards. They are getting rid of a system that has worked and are replacing it with one that will be confusing, chaotic and expensive. It will be expensive, because the economies of scale that is currently possible with local inspectors and in Her Majesty's inspectorate will disappear under the new contractual system.

But we will lose more. We will lose the ability of HMI to produce reports on sectors of education such as special needs, primary education and the delivery of certain subjects. For simple ideological reasons, the Government are throwing away what has been good in our education system, yet again because they want change for change's sake. They have given away the opportunity to lever up standards. They care only about a certain belief and a certain dogma.

During the debate, Opposition Members have suggested a set of proposals based around Labour's education standards commission which are designed to lever an improvement in general education standards. They are designed to enhance opportunities and not only to work but to ensure that opportunity exists across the whole of our education system.

The proposals in the Bill have gained no widespread support. There has been no process of consultation. But the Secretary of State held himself forward as the champion of free speech and information.

Mr. Dunn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I will not give way at this stage.

Mr. Dunn *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No. I have only three minutes left.

The Secretary of State keeps referring to the report which reviewed the functions of the inspectorate. Yet the same Secretary of State has denied that information to the House, parents and the country. The Secretary of State uses that report as an objective, impartial report. If he wants to use it in evidence, every other Member of Parliament should have the right to see it.

That is why we argue that the Bill should be referred to a Special Standing Committee. We want to have the right to weigh up the evidence and the arguments and find out what support there is in the country for the proposal to privatise HMI.

It was R. H. Tawney who said:

"What good parents would want for their own children, so the state should wish for all its children."

Ministers decide what they want for their own children. They opt out of the state system. They go to the private sector. They want to use the rest of our children, the 94 per cent. of children who use the state sector, for one ideological experiment after another.

Change for change's sake: that is the point about the Bill. It is further change for change's sake and further experimentation. It is for that reason, and because the Bill throws away good standards and does not give us the ability to improve standards, that we shall reject it. We shall vote against it this evening. We shall campaign against it and ensure that parents throughout Britain see the Bill as deeply damaging, because it is an ideologically driven privatising measure. We will vote against the Bill and we will win the argument, because parents want better. They want a change of Government—they want a Labour Government.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): Normally we expect better and get better from the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). Was it not interesting that not one Labour Member paid tribute to the excellent results being achieved by so many of our schools? My hon. Friends the Members

for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) did, as did the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). But Labour Members are interested in only one thing——

Mr. Steinberg: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eggar: Labour Members are interested only in——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a point of order. What is it?

Mr. Steinberg *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear.

Mr. Steinberg: The Minister deliberately misled the House. He said that not one Labour Member paid tribute *—[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) to withdraw the phrase "deliberately misled the House".

Mr. Steinberg: I withdraw the word "deliberately". The Minister misled the House.

Mr. Eggar: Of course, if the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) claims that he made such tributes in his speech, I am happy to accept it. The trouble is that the hon. Member for City of Durham made exactly the same speech as he usually makes. As usual, it was incomprehensible and perhaps I could be forgiven for failing to pick up his argument.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is it? *[Interruption.]* I must hear the point of order.

Mr. Haynes: You must understand, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister made a mistake with my hon. Friend, and he made a mistake with the National Union of Teachers. It goes on and on with this Minister and it is time you did something about it.

Mr. Speaker: I often hear that hon. Members make mistakes in this place, but I am not responsible for what they say, provided that it is in order.

Mr. Eggar: The greatest mistake of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is his retirement from the House at the next election. We really shall miss the court jester of the House, who has contributed a great deal to our debates.

Mr. Dunn: I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will find my remarks helpful. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who is an apprentice chair of the worst order, said that the Government had not consulted on this legislation. With his infinite knowledge of education, will the Minister of State remind us that, when the Labour party introduced the Education Act 1976, which led to the abolition of grammar schools——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Not all of them.

Mr. Dunn: It led to the abolition of almost all the grammar schools. Is there a commitment from the Labour party that it would consult if it came to power and introduced legislation to abolish grammar schools? The answer is no, not then and not for the future.

Mr. Eggar: As usual my hon. Friend is right. It is extraordinary that the Opposition appear to be worried about standards and have been talking about them at some length, but they are committed to destroying grammar schools, to withdrawing the assisted places scheme and to scrapping grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and much of what is excellent in our existing system.

What is more, despite all this business about consultation, in which the Opposition claim to be interested, they have told us that they will introduce a public inquiry system on school closures. Are the Opposition committed to a public inquiry on CTCs, grant-maintained schools and grammar schools?

It is appropriate now to turn to the particular crusade of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who has played such an important part in bringing to the attention of the House the vital need to publish exam results in a readily understandable way. He is clear, but the Labour party is far from clear. Indeed, at one stage during the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) I thought that he was getting near to saying that the Labour party was committed to publishing examination results; but no, he did not quite come out with that. I noticed that for at least 10 minutes of his speech the hon. Member for Leeds, Central was desperately trying to haul back the various commitments that the hon. Member for Blackburn may or may not have given. As usual, the Labour party is trying to have it both ways.

The Labour party has come to admit that testing pupils is an essential aid to learning—not something that it admitted as recently as a couple of years ago. Although testing may now be accepted within a socialist state——

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Not in Scotland.

Mr. Eggar: Not in Scotland, as my hon. Friend admits, but at least south of the border, the Labour party has not gone on to accept that the results of those tests should be made available to the public.

Apparently the only sort of publication that Labour Members will allow is one that is so hedged around with correction factors, socio-economic variables and explanatory footnotes that only a parent with a PhD in statistics and a specialisation in sociology could understand it. Under that system parents would be seen but not heard.

What sort of corrections are to be made to the basic examination data? We can take our pick. There are as many views as experts in the field. Should we expect less of a pupil because she or he has only one parent—however supportive? Should we assign a pupil a negative correction factor just because, for whatever reason, he qualifies for free meals? Conservative Members do not think so.

Perhaps we should look beyond pupils to the characteristics of their schools. Perhaps we should not expect too much of pupils who are educated in older buildings. Perhaps we should have a factor that takes account of the old Victorian high ceilings. Another factor that we could introduce might take account of buildings with 1960s flat roofs. Or we could introduce a factor relating to the quality of the environment. We could knock

[Mr. Eggar]

off a few points for trees, grass verges and clean pavements and top up the scores of those whose schools are in grimy streets—mainly, I might add, in socialist boroughs.

An adjustment which, I am sure, would commend itself to Labour Members is one that would take account of poor local education authority practice. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central will recognise the need to do that. After all, he represents a seat where primary pupils have been illserved by their LEA's imposition of a particular primary practice. Perhaps he could devise for us a correction factor——

Mr. Fatchett *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time, please.

Mr. Eggar: —for not being educated at Leeds. That is the sort of issue that the hon. Gentleman should address——

Mr. Fatchett *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: But in his own time.

Mr. Fatchett *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Get him to sit down, please. One at a time, please.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman would not give way, so I see no reason why he should make inroads to the limited time available to me. The basic fact is that a youngster will not get a job armed with a socio-economic factor or a correction factor. A youngster will not move on to further or higher education with a correction factor. What counts in the outside world is real achievement. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We must ensure that every child, from every background and in every school, does as well as he or she is capable. We must not cover up under-achievement with fiddled figures, whatever the various arguments from the Opposition.

The Opposition have not sought to deal with one question: what is the reason for depriving parents of information about examination results? Why should parents be kept in the dark? Why should they not be able to make their choice of schools with the full benefit of the relevant information?

The hon. Member for Blackburn made quite a lot of the document, "Raising the Standard", Labour's plan for an education standards commission. The Opposition told us that parents would be misled by simple examination result information. In the document of which the hon. Member for Blackburn is so proud, we are promised that the standards commission would

"publish detailed information on how to judge a school's performance."

In other words, the standards commission would be telling parents how they should interpret information. Doubtless it would doctor that information in one way or another according to the diktats of the Labour party.

Parents already know how to judge schools. What they want is the one thing that the Labour party would keep from them—the information on which to base their judgment.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton) *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: I will not give way.

The hon. Member for Blackburn tried to claim that his document on inspection offered clarity and a way forward to real quality control. I have had a careful look at that document and some things are clear. First, the Labour proposals destroy the independence of Her Majesty's inspectorate. It is placed under the overall control of an appointed quango and that quango will control Her Majesty's inspectorate's priorities, its inspection programmes and its reports. Her Majesty's inspectorate has a great deal more independence now than Labour would offer, and it will have even more when the Bill is passed.

Mr. Straw *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: No, no.

Mr. Straw *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eggar: HMI would be gratuitously split under Labour's proposals, with the larger part of it under the control of the quango and the lesser part reporting to the Secretary of State. In other words, those in HMI who inspect would not advice and those in HMI who advise would not inspect. As the former senior chief inspector, Eric Bolton, said:

"This would ensure that HMI would cease to exist."

It would cease to exist as a powerful force offering advice based on observation and inspection. In contradistinction to that, the Bill retains the integrity of HMI and strengthens its constitutional position.

Mr. Straw *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: No, I have not finished with the——

Mr. Straw *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask both hon. Gentlemen to sit down. If the Minister does not give way, the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Eggar: I have not finished with the hon. Gentleman yet. I have done him the courtesy of reading his document. The fact that he does not appear to have done so recently and that he was giving a very fanciful interpretation of the document does not deter me from going on to make my point. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not read his own policy document.

Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman says, that document simply offers validation by the new standards quango of LEAs'—not inspectors'—policies and guidance and "close informal links", to quote from the document. It does not offer what the hon. Gentleman claims it offers, which is direct control by the quango of the local inspectors.

The Labour party does not propose a model for external quality control. Under the hon. Gentleman's system, the true controller of quality remains the LEA, and the LEA decides who may or may not be an inspector. Under the Bill, that crucial decision—and it is crucial—remains with HMI. In the Labour party document the decision rests with LEAs. But there is another point——

Mr. McFall: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Clause 17 refers directly to Scotland. No mention has been made of Scotland. In view of the debilitating—*[Interruption.]*—political situation facing Conservatives there, that is a further slight on the people of Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have five minutes to go. Perhaps some comment will be made about that.

Mr. Eggar: Absolutely nowhere in the Labour party policy document is there anything about the publication of inspection reports. Labour Members appear to be converts to regular inspection, but only if it is secret and not available to parents.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made clear, much of the Bill is about strengthening Her Majesty's inspectorate's position. Her Majesty's inspectorate will have a clear duty to advise the Secretary of State and the ability to publish whatever, whenever and however it wishes. It will be in charge of the new system of inspections. It will decide who may and who may not inspect.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: No, I will not give way.

Hon. Members: Chicken.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's inspectorate will be making a direct impact on over 6,000 inspections each year, far more than at present. The numbers of Her Majesty's inspectors will be reduced, it is clear, but their influence and effect will be much greater.

Labour Members have only recently been converted to the case for school inspections. That interest was not manifest between the publication of the Audit Commission report and June this year. Indeed, between December 1989 and May 1991, the occupants of the Labour Front Bench did not ask one parliamentary question relating to inspection. That is how much they were concerned with inspection.

But it is far worse than that. Let us examine the practice and experience of LEAs on inspection and consider some of the authorities that Labour Members know. In Lancashire, for example, the hon. Member for Blackburn will know that the authority does not believe in inspection. It employs only advisers, not inspectors. The advisers' role in Lancashire is to "validate schools' self-evaluation"—not to go into the classroom to see what is going on, but to hear from staff how they would like things to be—*[Interruption.]* That is a Blackburn model of inspection. That is the Labour party really in action.

The vociferous hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) had much to say about inspection, but he did not refer to the lack of inspection in Sheffield, where only an advisory service is on offer, the policy guidance of which is unclear and where written reports are not produced.

I could go on at some length, but the examples that I have given are typical of Labour local education authorities. The Bill is good for parents and standards. I urge the House to vote for it.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 219.

Division No. 12] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul

Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Straw.]*

The House divided: Ayes 223, Noes 259.

Division No. 13] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, K.
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Mr. Nicol
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek

Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.
Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee.

EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education (Schools) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable under the Act in respect of the office and functions of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for England and the office and functions of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for Wales;

(b) any other expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act; and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting tomorrow, the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to European Community: The Inter-Governmental Conferences may, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), be proceeded with, though opposed, until Midnight.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Trunk Roads (Leicestershire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.25 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I am most grateful to have the opportunity to develop once again on the Adjournment the problems associated with trunk roads in Leicestershire. I am especially grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who has paid particular attention to the problem over recent months to try to get things right.

As my hon. Friend may know, three problems concern us. The first is what is known as the EDDR—the eastern district distributor road. The second problem is the new proposed Leicester eastern bypass and the third, which concerns me very much, is one of the most important east-west roads in the county—the A427 which runs from Loughborough to Market Harborough.

The eastern district distributor road is part of the relief road system round the city of Leicester. My hon. Friend, who has been courteous and kind in meeting delegations led by me and by other hon. Members to discuss the problem, has pointed out from time to time that the scheme is the responsibility of the county council.

The county council started the EDDR almost 50 years ago and it is still not finished. My hon. Friend was kind enough to tell me in answer to a question on the third problem, asking him whether he would make the east-west A427 a trunk road, that it came under the county council's responsibility for bypasses. Yet in the 20 or so years during which we have been associated with processions and demonstrations about the A427, not a single bypass has been built.

The EDDR was planned and begun more than 50 years ago under the aegis of the county council. The House and the public at large are entitled to study the performance, or lack of it, of the county council in that respect after 50 years. From the results on the ground, it seems that there is a great deal left to be desired. At the present speed of work on the EDDR—when it is finished it will provide much relief for traffic going round the city—the road is unlikely to be completed this millenium. In other words, it is unlikely to be completed before the year 2000.

The part of the Leicester relief road known as the SDDR—the southern district distributor road—is already discharging traffic on to the A6 at Oadby, a borough in my constituency, to the south of the city. In fact, the SDDR, upon which work has progressed well and speedily—it is all part of the relief road system round the city—has started to discharge traffic at a great rate on to the A6 at Oadby, which is seeking to percolate further south on the A6 or further east towards the A47.

When the traffic reaches the end of the SDDR at Oadby, there is nowhere else for it to go. As far as I can see, there is not likely to be anywhere for it to go for the next five or 10 years, except east on the A47 or south on the A6. There is no connecting link. Part of the EDDR is missing and that leaves a gap of two or three miles. As I have said, that stretch of road is not likely to be completed this millenium.

Most of my constituents find it amazing that that part of the road is missing, given that it is a planned and agreed eastern relief road for city traffic. I say planned and agreed, because, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, more than one public inquiry has taken place and the go-ahead has been given after all the proper formalities have been gone through. The EDDR, which is causing so much concern among my constituents, is the last piece of the Leicester ring road. Nine tenths of the Leicester ring road is finished and has been for some years. But the remaining tenth, on the eastern side of the city, running from Humberstone to the A6 at Oadby is still held up.

My hon. Friends and I feel justified in asking for a special debate to call attention to the ridiculous fact that, at Humberstone, which is part of the EDDR route, a mile of new road costing £1·5 million has stood finished and unopened for over a year, while the county and city councils argue about a proposed route by the side of the clinic on Scraptoft lane through a recreation area which happens to be owned by the city council. Meanwhile, the sealed-off stretch is being vandalised while it stands idle.

I find it extraordinary that the EDDR, planned for over 50 years, has been blocked by the city council. The council built 120 new houses on Goodwood road, which, in my view, should be demolished forthwith. Many people feel that that constituted a deliberate attempt by the city council to block Goodwood road, even though the council knew that it was part of the long-planned eastern relief road. That was an ill-advised planning decision by the city council, and questions could well be asked about the considerable waste of public money involved in building the new houses in Goodwood road.

Most Conservatives in the county, and many in the city, feel that the EDDR must go ahead, and must still follow the Goodwood road route, even if the houses there have to be soundproofed. Colchester road is also part of the planned route: it is already dual carriageway and presents no problems.

As I said a moment ago, I have carefully considered the problems that I have tried to outline tonight. I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister and recently he was kind enough to meet a delegation of Conservative Leicestershire county councillors, Oadby and Wigston borough councillors and Harborough district councillors. The united view of the delegation was that the EDDR must forge ahead on the agreed route along Goodwood road soon and on the planned route to the A6 to relieve traffic at Oadby.

When we raised those points at the meeting, the Minister made the perfectly valid point that the responsibility for the EDDR was not his. He said that it was the responsibility of the county council. However, the county council's engineer said that, while the council is acting as the Department's agent, no money can be spent on speeding up the EDDR without the Minister's specific consent. Some of us hope tonight to persuade the Minister that the county council should be authorised to speed up completion of the EDDR before the most unimaginable chaos occurs in Oadby in my constituency.

My next point concerns the Leicester eastern bypass. I want to place on record my appreciation of the Minister's kind and careful attention to the views of the delegation consisting of Conservative county councillors, borough councillors and district councillors. One of the reasons for tonight's debate is to try to persuade my hon. Friend the Minister that the points raised by the delegation should at least be considered before the Leicester eastern bypass is proceeded with.

We were united when we asked the Minister why Leicestershire county council, Oadby and Wigston

[Sir John Farr]

borough council and Harborough district council were not consulted. None of them was informed about the bypass. Even hon. Members were not asked for an opinion. That is regrettable, because if the Minister had taken the trouble to consult some of his colleagues in the House, he would have been told not to hurry over the bypass.

A solution is being sought today to a problem that many of us feel will not arise until the end of the century provided that the link—the EDDR—is made to work. It is essential to get that working like a clock and if that is achieved, the need for an eastern bypass will recede into the mists of next century. There is no hurry. The EDDR should be sorted out and a much more relaxed programme for an eastern bypass could then be adopted.

Another important point that I raised with the Minister when we met him—it was a point of which I should have given him notice—continues to recur relates to the name of the consultants that he has appointed for the new Leicester eastern bypass. We raised that subject at the meeting at the Department the other day. We said that we were unhappy with Travers Morgan, which had been appointed as agent for the Leicester eastern bypass, as it was the agent employed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society for its Stretton Magna scheme, which involves urbanising up to 5,000 acres in my constituency near Oadby with golf courses, business parks—the lot.

That organisation certainly was engaged in a study at the request of the CWS. Of course, the CWS farms to a great degree in Leicestershire. Travers Morgan, at the time of the submission of the CWS project a year or two ago, did the work for the CWS proposed link road, which it was going to throw in as a sweetener, between the A47 and the A6.

So far, I have been on ground which the Minister cannot challenge, because I am quite exact in my information. However, there is a question mark over the impartiality of Travis Morgan. If Travis Morgan had already done a good deal of the work for the proposed Leicester eastern bypass, as employee and having been paid a fee by the CWS to do the work only a year or two ago, surely it was able to use that recently acquired knowledge to submit to the Department a tender which was probably unfairly competitive because the organisation had already done a great deal of the ground work as a paid agent of the CWS.

The House is entitled to know the actual tender figures for the new Leicester eastern bypass and by how much did Travers Morgan win the contract. If the gap was large, did it represent best practice? With that organisation's previous knowledge, paid for by the CWS, it would seem that, to put it mildly, that was questionable. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, in such matters of public concern, everything must be seen to be absolutely above board.

I have been asked about the presence of Travers Morgan in preparing for the Minister's Department a scheme for much of the work which it had already carried out. When Travers Morgan quoted, were the other tendering companies aware of Travers Morgan's previous involvement? What would their feelings be? Can my hon. Friend the Minister assure me that they were informed, as they should have been, in the public interest? If they were not informed and if there was anything—I will not say "underhand"; not as open as it should have been—would not it be best, to restore public confidence to the issue, for Travers Morgan to be dropped as consultants for the Leicester eastern bypass and for fresh consultants to be appointed?

The A427 from Lutterworth to Market Harborough is also a county council road. Quite rightly, in answer to questions that I have tabled in the past couple of weeks, my hon. Friend the Minister has said that he is not responsible and that it is a matter for the county council. The county council has again written to me to say that, as far as Leicester is concerned, only three bypasses can be funded annually in the county, simply because the Minister quite properly keeps his fingers on the till. Three bypasses a year in Leicestershire means that plans for bypasses that are badly needed on the A427 at towns such as Theddingworth fade away into the dim and distant future.

The A427 runs from Lutterworth to Market Harborough. Only recently there was a march by protesters along the whole length of the road. Some had endearing messages for me and some had not so endearing messages for the Government. It is all recorded on film. The A427 is an important little road. It is the main southern east-west road running through the county. The whole lot needs improving.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Hear, hear.

Sir John Farr: I am glad to have the support of my hon. Friend, who knows the road well. It aggravated the people who were marching the other day that, over 15 years ago, Leicestershire county council agreed a bypass plan for Theddingworth. The plan was about to go ahead. Land was acquired. The scheme had been approved, but it was suddenly dropped like a hot potato because the council had heard that a road called the A1-M1 link road was due to be built in another county.

The county council lost interest in improving the A427 in any manner. Many of us feel that that is a shoddy way to treat people who have the most terrible problems. Villages are almost snuffed out by articulated vehicles every day. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to examine once again the problem of the A427 at Theddingworth. It is a strategic road. Will he authorise, or instruct the county council to authorise, the early commencement of a bypass for Theddingworth and one or two other communities?

10.46 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): It is with considerable diffidence that I respond to an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir John Farr), who has served his area of Leicestershire for more than 20 years with such distinction. He is an expert, if ever there was one, on roads and other matters in Leicestershire.

I agree wholeheartedly that the Leicester eastern distributor road is a cause of great frustration. The road has not yet been completed and the prospect of its being completed soon are not nearly as good as we would wish. The city of Leicester has developed on a fairly conventional pattern, with main radial roads feeding to business and employment areas in the centre. In recent years, the county council has developed inner and outer orbital routes to distribute traffic around the city. Both the

central relief road and the completed sections of the outer district distributor road have been funded with the help of 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant.

As my hon. Friend says, three quarters of the outer distributor road is now complete. Two sections remain to be completed. The A46-A47 link was accepted for TSG in 1986-87. The first western stage was completed in December 1989. The remainder of the scheme has planning permission, but orders are required for alterations to side roads and accesses and for compulsory purchase. The orders were published in March 1990 and the public inquiry was originally programmed for this summer.

Land will be acquired principally from the Leicester clinic and public open space in the control of Leicester city council. Negotiations have been proceeding with both. The city council previously showed an unwillingness to take the land out of public open space, possibly to frustrate the road scheme, although recently it apparently reluctantly agreed to support the scheme, subject to conditions. As my hon. Friend said, part of the completed first stage is not yet open to traffic and is subject to vandalism.

I am afraid to say that it is a sorry saga and an example of the worst conflicts that arise between a city and a county council which do not act together in the interests of the local citizens.

The Leicester eastern distributor road was originally planned back in the 1930s. There was land reservation for a dual carriageway and in the late 1960s Leicester city council—then the highway authority—built houses on the reservation for the second highway.

Recent traffic studies justify the need for greater traffic capacity than that provided by a single carriageway, but Leicester city council has recently resolved to reject the option that would have required extensive property demolition, in favour of a more modest improvement of an existing road.

The Government have responsibility for trunk roads and motorways and allocate resources, under the transport supplementary grant system, for local authority schemes. We often express our views on what we would like to happen, but we do not have the ability to require local authorities to take particular courses of action.

As I said in an earlier debate, mentioned by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), and as I have already told my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough in meetings, it seems totally illogical that the distributor road has not been completed, and I hope that it soon will be. Certainly, any suggestion that it cannot be completed because of the Government's reluctance to give it funding is totally mischievous. It is included in Leicestershire county council's transport planning programme for construction in 1993, 1994 and 1995, and has good economic justifications.

Obviously at the moment grant for 1993 only has been applied for. If the county council thought that it could start work in 1992, it would have put it in the programme submission that is currently under consideration. If the council still thought that it could start work in 1992, it might not be too late for it to propose an amendment to the submission, although time is extremely short, because we will be announcing the final determination of the allocations in December.

Any suggestion that the Government are holding up the scheme is totally mischievous and without foundation. The Government would be pleased for the scheme to proceed and have always made it clear that it would probably qualify for transport supplementary grant.

I also refer to the A427. I know that my hon. Friend has campaigned for a long time for an improvement to that corridor; and, as he says, again that is not a direct responsibility of the Department of Transport. However, I hope that he will be pleased today—not only for himself, but for his constituents—to know that contracts 2 and 3 on the M1-A1 link road have been awarded to Tarmac Construction. It is a two-year contract with a value approaching £36 million and is a further major investment in the roads infrastructure in Leicestershire.

That road will give tremendous relief to people living alongside the A427. Obviously, it is not as good a solution as a bypass and no doubt that will still be a priority for the local authority. However, I hope that, by getting much of the through traffic off the A427 with the M1-A1 link, it will bring the relief that my hon. Friend seeks.

As regards the Leicester eastern bypass, that scheme was put into the roads programme in May 1989, in the "Roads for Prosperity" White Paper. Its planning and design are at a very early stage, with consultants only recently appointed to undertake initial design work. The next key event for the scheme will be a public consultation, which is planned to take place in 1993. The Leicester eastern bypass is thought to be an important strategic route, because it will bring relief to that side of Leicester and will complement the western bypass, work on which is expected to begin next year.

The A46-A6 link, which is effectively the Leicester eastern bypass, was introduced into the programme because it was thought that it would be able to provide continuity in the trunk road network for long distance north-west to south-east traffic. I know that my hon. Friend has concerns about that and about the consultants chosen after competitive tender to be responsible for its design. On the latter point, that was after a competition in which Travers Morgan One was successful. I cannot give my hon. Friend the details of exactly the amount by which it was more successful than any other tenderer. I hope that he will accept that the tendering carried out by the Department of Transport is purely objective.

It is true to say that these are the same consultants who have been advising us on the Leicester western bypass. They are highly esteemed and wholly professional. I ask my hon. Friend to accept that they will look at the scheme objectively and will take into account all the views of the local people which will be expressed during the consultation period that will precede the announcement of any preferred route. It is still possible, even now, if everybody says that they do not need the bypass after all, that the Government may withdraw it from their programme. It would be premature to take such a decision tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

1. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which middle east countries have no diplomatic links with Britain; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We do not have diplomatic relations with the Republic of Iraq or with Libya.

Mr. Brown: Obviously, both countries deserve to be recognised. Having said that, is not it clear that there can be no peace in the middle east until the Palestinian question is resolved? Will the Secretary of State set an example to his Israeli friends and recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation as a Government in exile? Will he also allow it to set up an embassy in London? These questions are important.

Mr. Hurd: The answer is no to both halves of the hon. Gentleman's question. We have not changed the basis on which we keep in touch with Palestinians.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a place for parliamentary contacts where we have no diplomatic relations? Does not the record in recent years show that such contacts can facilitate the resumption of diplomatic relations, especially if tackled on an all-party basis by Members of this House?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with that in particular cases, but perhaps not in all cases. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his recent success in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Under his leadership there can be new opportunities for that organisation.

Sir David Steel: In view of the constructive contribution which the Palestinian delegation, among others, made to the Madrid peace talks, does the Foreign Secretary believe that it is any longer sensible for Ministers to continue to refuse even to talk to the PLO?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is confusing two matters. It is certainly important for us to keep in touch with the Palestinians, which is why I answered the original supplementary question carefully. We keep in touch. I saw Mr. Faisal Husseini earlier in the year and the Minister of State, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), has met other Palestinians. I have already answered the question about contacts with the PLO.

Sir Robert Rhodes James: Although there is strong and real appreciation in the middle east of the British involvement in the Madrid peace process—not least among the Palestinians, as well as the Israelis—will my right hon. Friend confirm that there are no ministerial contacts with the PLO?

Mr. Hurd: That is the position. The Palestinian part of the peace process is extremely important. By general agreement, the Palestinian component of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation handled itself extremely well—indeed, with distinction—at the Madrid conference. There is a balance within the Palestinian group. We want to act carefully in order not to disturb that balance. It is important for us to keep in touch with the Palestinians. We shall continue to do so on the basis that I have described.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. Gentleman join me once again in congratulating Mr. James Baker on the notable and indispensable part that he played in bringing about the Madrid conference? Will he pay tribute to all who participated in that conference, including the Palestinian representatives? Does he agree that if the Israeli authorities prosecuted Hannan Ashrawi, it would be an act of folly which would be destructive in further stages of the middle east peace process?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's first remark. I have encouraged Secretary Baker to continue to give his personal impact to those negotiations because that is essential, and he is clearly willing to do so. As I said, the Palestinian delegation distinguished themselves in Madrid. I could see no advantage, and considerable disadvantage, if Hannan Ashrawi were to be prosecuted in the way that the right hon. Gentleman described.

Know-how Fund

2. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he is giving to additional know-how support for central and eastern European countries.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): By 1992-93, we will have more than tripled the original £15 million budget allocation for the know-how fund. At this stage we have no plans for further increases.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome that positive action by the Government. Will representations to other Governments be as strong as possible to encourage them to make the sort of contributions to the know-how fund and to know-how activity that is absolutely crucial for the developing economies in central and eastern Europe, and without which they will never develop democratic politics as well?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend knows that the know-how fund is greatly admired by other donors and is very much appreciated in eastern Europe. We are told that it is the most flexible and fast-reacting source of aid, and that is exactly why we have pursued that route. We agree that it is the best way to help those countries to establish sound democracies and a sound economy.

Dr. Kim Howells: The Minister will be aware that one of the most serious problems affecting the economies of central and eastern Europe is an energy shortage, which is mainly due to the destruction of hydrocarbon supplies from the Soviet Union. Will she ensure that all encouragement is given to the undoubted expertise in oil and gas exploration and technology in this country to aid the Romanians to revive their ailing oil and gas industries?

Mrs. Chalker: I am aware that a number of United Kingdom oil and gas companies are extremely interested. They have not come to us for specific assistance under the know-how fund. Should they do so, we shall obviously consider it sympathetically in line with the priorities that we have set. Romania has a slightly smaller programme than the other countries, but we wish it to return to the path of good government and sound economics, and the fund is part of that.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that during a recent visit I made to Albania on behalf of the Council of Europe, politicians of all parties expressed a keen interest in receiving British know-how, but were disappointed that we have yet to establish a British embassy in Tiranë? When does she anticipate that that can be resolved?

Mrs. Chalker: We must keep the matter under review. The economic and political position is very confused in Tiranë. We understand Albania's anxiety for British representation, and I shall keep that very much in the forefront of our consideration.

Mr. Robertson: May I associate myself with the praise that has been heaped on the know-how fund? It has been an enormous success in central and eastern Europe. Throughout most of those countries the universal view is that Britain should do more to enhance its reputation through the fund. Will the Minister ensure that pressure is put on the Treasury, and kept on, to ensure that appropriate resources are made available? Will he further ensure that there is no inflexibility in the criteria, so that British know-how in areas such as local government and social services can also be exported?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. We are grateful to him and to all the other people who serve on the advisory board of the know-how fund. We should concentrate our help on banking and financial services. They are not the only priority, but they are the highest. The banking system and the economic reforms must work in those countries before anything else can happen. It is a crucial part of their economic regeneration, and it is on that basis that other services can follow. I very much hope that the work that we are already doing will lead to initiatives being taken by those countries as a result of the guidance that we have given at local government, as well as national, level.

Nepal

3. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments in United Kingdom-Nepalese relations since the general election there earlier this year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I recently visited Nepal and was greatly impressed by the commitment of the Nepalese people to the multi-party democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy. I was also gratified by the immense good will and friendship towards Britain which I encountered on all sides.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for another illuminating and helpful reply. I believe that he has just returned from his second visit to Nepal—a country with which this country has had good relations for about 175 years. Can he say what further action we may take to establish democracy firmly there?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are immensely keen to help consolidate democracy in Nepal. We provide a substantial amount of aid, and £1 million of our aid money is committed for good government projects. Those projects are still to be selected. Following the imaginative suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), in recognition of Nepal's return to democracy we are presenting to the Nepalese Parliament a throne for its Speaker.

Rev. Martin Smyth: We welcome the positive response from the Minister. Will he tell us whether it is intended to give help for water projects, sanitation or afforestation?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, certainly those are all included in our aid programme which, as I have said, is substantial, amounting to some £17 million a year. That is nearly double what it was four years ago.

Mr. Thorne: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. Bearing in mind that 500,000 Nepalese soldiers served with the British forces in the two world wars, that no fewer than 50,000 were either killed or seriously wounded, that 13 won Victoria Crosses, that 13 British officers serving with the Gurkhas also won Victoria Crosses, and that under "Options for Change" we are proposing to reduce the number of Gurkhas from 8,000 to 2,500, can my hon. Friend assure the House that the Foreign Office will take into account the reduction in what amounts to aid, currently provided through pay and pensions, in its future plans for aid to Nepal?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are all impressed by the Gurkhas, and anyone who has visited Nepal and seen them in operation is even more impressed. We are helping with some specific problems that will occur in the run-down, such as the expansion of the former military hospital at Dharan. My hon. Friend will be aware that the terms of redundancy that are to be provided will be a significant improvement on previous terms. There is also a significant programme to help with the resettlement of former Gurkha soldiers.

Croatia

4. Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now recognise the Government of Croatia.

Mr. Hurd: This question is constantly reviewed. Those Yugoslav republics which want independence will get it, but recognition now would not stop the fighting. We have to judge whether recognition of two republics now would increase the very real danger of civil war in other republics.

Mr. Alton: Now that the German Government have signalled their intention in the foreseeable future to recognise Croatia, would not it be a morally important statement for the British Government to do likewise and stand alongside this cruelly treated people? Now that humanitarian sea lanes are to be open, does the Foreign Secretary accept that there may also be merit in the British Government promoting the idea of an internationally enforced sky protection zone over Croatia to prevent incursions and the further bombardment of Croatian cities? Such a sky shield would protect people from further massacre and the destruction of Croatia's heritage.

Mr. Hurd: European Community Governments will probably continue to act together on this matter. As I have said before, my worry is that if we recognise the two republics that the hon. Gentleman mentions, we may force the pace and create an explosion in Kosovo, Bosnia and Macedonia, where there are tensions and possibilities of bloodshed and civil war that go beyond anything that we have seen even in Croatia.

There is another possibility, to which the hon. Gentleman alluded. There is now a chance of progress via measures such as those that the EC has taken, and via the possibility of a United Nations peacekeeping force. We are pressing forward examination of those in the Security Council. The new element is that both the Serbs and the Croats have, for the first time, shown a general willingness to accept such a force.

Mr. Aitken: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear whether his answer, which displayed an understandable degree of elegant procrastination, will lead to the Government saying that the Yugoslav federation as we know it has no diplomatic future?

Mr. Hurd: I think that Yugoslavia as we know it has come to an end. It is not yet clear what kind of agreements the six republics might be able to reach about future co-operation, but they will certainly not be on the old basis.

Mr. Kaufman: As the right hon. Gentleman referred to action in the Security Council, and in the light of the fall of Vukovar and the continuing horrendous threat to Dubrovnik, will he seek to obtain agreement for a Security Council resolution imposing comprehensive sanctions, including an international oil ban, on the whole area, as a way of exerting pressure to bring the fighting to an end?

Mr. Hurd: The three EC members of the Security Council—Britain, France and Belgium—have reached agreement on what we want the Security Council to do. Our representatives are now canvassing support for that. I am not sure whether we shall get the support, but the plan includes the elements mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman, and encouragement for the concept of a United Nations peacekeeping force once the appropriate conditions exist.

Baltic States

6. Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the Baltic states.

11. Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what importance he attaches to developing relations with the newly independent Baltic states.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Garel-Jones): Our relations with the Baltic states are good. We welcomed their independence in August. We now are offering them help in consolidating their independence and rebuilding their economies. We are already backing projects in three states through the know-how fund. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State visited the states in September immediately after we re-established diplomatic relations with them to underline our support. British ambassadors are now operating in all three Baltic capitals. They are doing a good job under difficult circumstances.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend think that the Labour party was acting in the best interests of Britain and of our Baltic friends when, in 1969, it did a deal with Brezhnev and handed over the Baltic gold?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) looks anxious, as indeed he might, because one of the current concerns of the Baltic states is the return of their gold. That matter is high on their agenda, and the hon. Gentleman may recall that the Labour party has distinguished itself over the past 40 years by being wrong about practically every foreign policy and defence issue that has come before it. On few occasions has it shown less moral scruple than when it made a deal with Brezhnev to dispose of the Soviet gold. The Conservative party opposed that agreement—my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) was one of those who voted against it. We thought it wrong then and we still think so. We do not know what legal or moral basis there was for it.

My hon. Friend will be relieved to know that my hon. and learned Friend, my fellow Minister of State, is having constructive discussions with our friends in the Baltic states on the matter.

Mr. Field: Will my hon. Friend confirm that as part of that remarkable deal the then Labour Government paid a £500,000 sweetener to the Soviet Government? Can he give a categorical assurance to the House that none of that money was used by the Soviet Communist party to try to destabilise this country and foment industrial disputes, as it has now admitted that it did?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can give the House no assurance about what the Soviet——

Mr. Anderson: That is an own gold.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman voted for the Bill. He was in the House at the time, so he should hang his head in shame. He voted for the Bill, as did two of the

Liberals here, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) no assurance about the eventual destiny of that money. At that time the Conservative party voted against the Bill because we thought that it was entirely wrong. The discussions that the Minister of State, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is now having with the Baltic states are taking place in a constructive atmosphere. We hope to reach a satisfactory solution to this matter.

Mr. Galloway: Coming from the party that went to Munich to betray Czechoslovakia—*[Interruption.]* I find the recourse to a 20-year-old smear by the Foreign Office Minister most unseemly. It might have something to do with the forthcoming general election when any smear will do.

Since the Minister is so concerned about the gold belonging to the Baltic states, will he see justice done for the poorest country in Europe, Albania, whose gold is in the Bank of England and was stolen from that country four decades ago? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question was supposed to be about the Baltic states, but as we have become hooked on gold, I think that we had better have the answer.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Moral indignation sits rather uneasily on the hon. Gentleman's shoulders, particularly on this matter. The question refers to the Baltic states, not Albania.

Mr. Flynn: The people of the Baltic states will be baffled at the petty party points that Conservative Members have tried to make out of the great victory that was achieved by those people.

I have a serious question. What representations have the Government made about the new proposal, particularly in Latvia, to restrict citizenship to those whose descendants came from the Baltic states and to those who speak the Baltic languages? Are we making representations to widen the terms of citizenship in those three states to avoid their being turned into three Ulsters?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Certainly, the hon. Gentleman has made an important point. Respect for human rights and minorities and, in particular, respect for those who speak minority languages or come from a minority ethnic group is an important matter. We have, of course, stressed to our friends in the Baltic states that their membership of the CSCE—Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—process and their aspirations to join the Council of Europe will naturally depend to a great extent upon their ability to meet international standards in such matters.

Cyprus

7. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's attitude to an international conference on Cyprus early next year.

Mr. Hurd: Britain supported Security Council resolution 716, which endorsed the aim of an international meeting. We hope that enough progress can be made for that objective to be accomplished, and shall continue to give the Secretary-General of the United Nations our full support.

Mr. Squire: With the tragedy that is Cyprus today and the role that we have as a guarantor power, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he is prepared to use the framework of the Western European Union to press for an acceptable solution—acceptable to all sides in Cyprus? Will he bear in mind in particular that many Greek Cypriots are concerned about the Turkish guarantee that overhangs all the proceedings?

Mr. Hurd: The best instrument for reaching agreement in Cyprus remains the United Nations. My hon. Friend rightly referred to our job as a guarantor power and, in that respect, we must do everything we can with the Turks, the Greeks and the Cypriots to help Secretary-General Perez De Cuellar to make some progress in his remaining weeks of office. I had hoped that some progress would be made in the autumn and I am disappointed that that has not happened. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have tried, together with all those I have described, to put impetus behind the process. I hope that the new Turkish Government will pay full and constructive attention to what the Secretary General is trying to do.

Mr. Faulds: As British Governments of both colours have failed the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus, to whom they undertook certain responsibilities under the constitution of 1960 and the treaty of guarantee, would not it be advisable for the Government to be a bit more sensitive to the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots who do not want to see—under whatever agreement, which may be too favourable to the Greek Cypriots—a return to the situation in the 1960s? In 1963, Makarios aborted the constitution and totally destroyed Turkish Cypriot rights.

Mr. Hurd: There is much more to the history of Cyprus than that. A heavy responsibility falls on Mr. Denktash, who is the acknowledged leader of the Turkish community in Cyprus. He has a strong responsibility not to be content with the status quo, but to exert himself to try to find an answer, community to community, to settle the dispute.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some British companies have not received the compensation due to them from the Turkish authorities controlling northern Cyprus? Does he agree that steps must be taken to persuade the Turkish authorities to give such compensation, because it is causing great hardship? A company in my constituency is in that position. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to look at the question afresh, please?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I shall certainly do that. If my hon. Friend has not yet sent me details of the company in his constituency, I hope that he will do so.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that an international conference as proposed simply would not succeed unless Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities admit that they have both been responsible for atrocities and extremism?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know whether admissions about the past are as important as agreement about the future. I had hoped for a conference with the Turkish and Greek

Governments and representatives of the two communities. There seemed to be the prospect of such a conference in the late summer and autumn and the chance that it might make progress. That chance has faded, but we must try to recreate it.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Secretary of State lay aside diplomatic niceties for a moment and say that that hope has receded since July as a direct result of the intransigence of Mr. Denktash, who has made no move despite the fact that concessions have been made by the other side? Is it not now time to say that clearly and to work with, we hope, the new Turkish Government, to bring pressure on Mr. Denktash to show some realism in the matter?

Mr. Hurd: I answered the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) with my view about Mr. Denktash's responsibilities. I agree that the reaction and response of Mr. Denktash is an important part of unlocking the position.

Mr. Day: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the difficulties of the tragic situation in Cyprus is that the Greek Cypriot Government are recognised as the Government of the whole island, whereas the Turkish invasion was precipitated by the Greek Cypriot coup, which destroyed the 1960 constitution? The Government recognise that constitution as giving the present Greek Cypriot Government legitimacy.

Mr. Hurd: There is a lot of history to Cyprus. That is part of it, as is the Turkish invasion of 1974. We recognise the Government of the Republic of Cyprus as the Government of the whole of Cyprus. We recognise that it is crucial for any settlement that there be agreement between the two communities, as communities. That was all set out in the recent Security Council resolution to which I referred in my reply and for which we voted.

East Timor

8. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support the United Nations-led efforts to send a Portuguese parliamentary mission to East Timor.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to encourage moves by Indonesia and Portugal to resolve their differences over East Timor.

Mr. Dunnachie: In view of the appalling massacre that took place last week in East Timor, will the Government call on the United Nations Security Council to discuss East Timor? Will they press the Security Council to send monitoring teams to East Timor? What action, other than bland expressions of concern, will they take against Indonesia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not in the business of making bland expressions of concern. I was answering precisely the hon. Gentleman's question. The developments that have taken place led to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State expressing the Government's worry to the Indonesian ambassador on 13 November. Ministers are following developments most closely. The Indonesian Government have announced a commission of inquiry into the events in East Timor. We shall consider the position further in the light of that report.

Mr. Couchman: When my right hon. Friend the Minister of State next has contact with the Indonesian ambassador, will he express the abhorrence of the House at the indiscriminate shooting of men, women and children in Dili, which I visited three years ago with other hon. Members? Will my right hon. Friend stress that, if this country is to develop further productive relations with Indonesia, a most important country, such outrageous behaviour must cease?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can certainly agree with my hon. Friend—that incident was most regrettable, particularly in light of the fact that the human rights record of Indonesia had been improving in recent years.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister's complacency is appalling. Is he aware that the massacre in Indonesia was as intensive as that of the killing fields of Cambodia and took place in a country that Indonesia occupied illegally? As the Government are allegedly concerned about the appalling human rights record, why do they sell frigates, aircraft, missiles and armoured cars to Indonesia and provide military training for Indonesian troops? That position was intensified in September, when the Secretary of State for Defence visited Indonesia to seek out more military contracts. Is it not time that the Government stopped selling arms to a country with such a brutal regime? If they do not, they will be guilty of the worst sort of hypocrisy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not allow the export of arms and equipment likely to be used against the civil population. *[Interruption.]* Let me indicate the European Community declaration of 13 November, of which our support was at the forefront. The declaration vehemently condemned the violence and urged the Indonesian Government to ensure that members of the Indonesian armed forces and police in East Timor refrained immediately from using violence, and that members of the armed forces and police who were responsible should be brought to trial. We welcomed the news that the Indonesian authorities were mounting an investigation, which would have to be carried out promptly, fully and fairly.

European Foreign Ministers

10. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on co-operation and co-ordination between Foreign Ministers of the European Community.

Mr. Hurd: I meet my European Community colleagues often. We have increasingly developed the habit of co-operation and common action among the Twelve. The system has worked flexibly and effectively to Britain's advantage.

Mr. Arnold: Given the record of the European Commission to interfere in every nook and cranny in this country and others throughout Europe, is it not clear that the foreign policy of this country and the European Community should continue to be developed by the

Foreign Ministries of the Twelve? Should not our efforts be put into improving the mechanisms and practices of co-operation between the Twelve?

Mr. Hurd: There is a lot in that. The Commission is present at the political co-operation meetings, which proves useful and important, but it does not have the monopoly of initiative, as it would have if the meetings took place under the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Ernie Ross: While we have co-operation and co-ordination, will the Secretary of State encourage our European partners to start a true dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organisation? The Secretary of State will know that it was one of his predecessors, Lord Carrington, who was instructed by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), not to have formal contacts with the PLO in 1980. Given the success in getting the Israelis and Palestinians round the table, would it not make more sense for the Government to right that wrong and ensure that, during our presidency from July onwards, we talk directly to the PLO?

Mr. Hurd: I had three questions on this point a few minutes ago. I tried to explain then the basis on which we maintain contacts with the Palestinians. I hope that I chose my words with some care; I do not want to add to them.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: In considering what possible action to take against Libya in future, will my right hon. Friend work extremely closely with his European Community opposite numbers? Will he take note of the number of Arab countries that have been strongly opposed to many Libyan terrorist activities over the years?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that, in handling the present situation after the issue of the Lockerbie warrants, we need to keep in close touch both with Arab friends and European partners, and that is what we are doing. I should have thought that the present requirement of the whole civilised world is relatively simple. It is that the Libyans should hand over to the United States or British jurisdiction the two named officials against whom the crime of mass murder is alleged in the warrants issued by the Advocate-General.

Democratic Accountability

12. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings he has had with his EC counterparts to discuss the development of democratic accountability in the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend met our colleagues from the other member states of the Community for two days last week at Noordwijk. Strengthening democratic accountability in the Community was one of the issues discussed.

Mr. Beith: If Ministers are serious about wanting us not to be governed by unaccountable bureaucrats, why are they not leading in the argument that those decisions that have to be taken at European level are fully accountable to a stronger European Parliament that is elected by a fair system? Why are they resisting those arguments, or seeing them as concessions that might be made during negotiations?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Liberal party persists in referring to proportional representation as a fairer system. It is not fairer, it is different. One of the differences, in my view, is that it provides a foot in the door for extremist parties of the sort that we do not want in Britain.

Sir Peter Hordern: Is it not time to put an end to the fraud and corruption that go on within the European Community, as evidenced by the continual reports of the European Court of Auditors? Surely the European Parliament should be given powers to summon Commissioners and permanent secretaries of different countries to put those abuses to them.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is right: he has raised one of the areas in which Britain has tried to take a lead in the discussions in the Community. We have advocated a considerable extension of the powers of the European Parliament in its work in scrutinising the Commission and ensuring that proper financial accountability is introduced. We hope that there will be new articles in the treaty to strengthen the role of the European Parliament in the area to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Mr. O'Hara: Will the Foreign Secretary enlist the co-operation of his partners in the European Community to address their attention to some of the living features of the history of Cyprus, to insist that every one of the 35,000 Turkish troops that occupy the northern part of Cyprus shall be withdrawn, and to send a message to the families of the 6,000 Greek Cypriots who were killed in 1974 and the sixteen hundred and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a bit wide. The question is all about Europe.

Mr. O'Hara:——who are still debarred from returning to their homes? In their language: "Then xehnáme"—"we forget not."

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I can try to link the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question to the Community, the fact is that Cyprus has applied for membership of the European Economic Community. That membership, along with others, will not be considered until 1993. When the Community came to consider the application, one of the things that it would wish to ensure was that the benefit of the membership would be available to the whole community.

Croatia

13. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take measures to assist in the preservation of the integrity of Croatia.

Mr. Hurd: We and our EC partners have repeatedly made it clear that we will not recognise changes in Yugoslavia's internal borders unless they are brought about by peaceful negotiation. They cannot be brought about by force.

Mr. Butler: Why has the United Nations been so slow to act effectively to stop the Serb-led aggression reminiscent of the worst of communist thuggery?

Mr. Hurd: As I have said before, the focus is now on United Nations intervention. I do not think that any member of the United Nations, any more than Her

Majesty's Government, would want to send their forces to fight their way into the situation. But the new factor is that both the Serbian and the Croatian leadership have said that they are willing in principle to accept a United Nations peacekeeping force. I accept that that puts the responsibility on the United Nations secretariat and on the Security Council.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Foreign Secretary go a bit further and say what the attitude is of the British Government? If the matter is being considered by the United Nations and a peacekeeping force is mounted, surely British and French troops, Western European Union troops, will be in the front line. What plans are being made to dispatch British troops to Yugoslavia?

Mr. Hurd: No such plans are being made.

Mr. Fry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to preserve the integrity of Croatia is to work for a permanent settlement after a lasting ceasefire, and that recognition is just one of the issues that has to be sorted out before there can be a successful conclusion? Others include dealing with the disputed areas, the resettlement of the dispossessed and, and a very important point, adequate rights for the minorities in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. Those are all matters that we are trying to persuade the different leaders in Yugoslavia to discuss. That is the purpose of the peace conference in The Hague, which they frequently attend and where they issue declarations and undertakings which they do not always respect when they get home. But we have to continue with that. My hon. Friend is right: if one tries to pick out one element and not the others, the result may not be beneficial.

Germany

14. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British diplomatic staff are stationed in Germany; and what their responsibilities are with regard to human rights issues.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The number is 81. The embassy and or consulates-general have a responsibility for providing regular reporting and analysis of issues in Germany, including human rights, relevant to United Kingdom interests.

Mr. Winnick: Has the British embassy in Germany made it clear to the German authorities how deeply shocking and despicable have been the racist attacks by Nazi thugs there? Is the Minister aware that it is extremely unfortunate that once again Labour Members of Parliament in the House of Commons have to protest against racism, Nazi hooliganism and Nazi thugs operating on German soil? We do not require lectures from Germany about federalism and union and so on; we require Germany to put its own house in order.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think that there is a question of lecturing either of Germany by us or of us by Germany. Our distaste and disgust at the events in Germany are shared 100 per cent. by the German Administration and, as every opinion poll shows, by the vast majority of decent German people. Therefore, we do not have to make any firm representations to the German Government in such matters; they feel exactly as we do about them.

Hong Kong

15. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what legal advice is available to Vietnamese boat people during the screening process when they claim refugee status; what is done to inform applicants for refugee status of their rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Under the comprehensive plan of action, responsibility for advice about screening falls to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which briefs all Vietnamese migrants on arrival. The Hong Kong authorities also provide a pamphlet in Vietnamese to all migrants explaining the screening procedures in detail. The UNHCR also provides legal advice and help to migrants at all stages of the screening and review process.

Mr. Young: How many of the boat people have been granted refugee status? Has any pressure been brought on Her Majesty's Government by the Chinese, the butchers of Tiananmen square, to expedite the return of, or to remove any rights from, those refugees?

Mr. Hurd: I can write to the hon. Gentleman with the figures, but the majority of arrivals from Vietnam who are screened are found not to be refugees. Only those who are screened out—who are found by that procedure not to be refugees—are sent back to Vietnam. That matter is one on which the people of Hong Kong feel very strongly. We have made repeated statements on our policy to the House, and it is not a matter on which we need to take advice or instructions from the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Harris: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who have observed the screening process in the camps in Hong Kong have been greatly impressed by its thoroughness and fairness? Will my right hon. Friend and others involved in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office accept congratulations on the patience with which that huge problem has been tackled? Most of us are pleased that those people who are not political refugees are sent back to Vietnam.

Mr. Hurd: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, who has put his finger on the real point. It is not reasonable to expect Hong Kong to continue to accept, year in, year out, large numbers of people coming from Vietnam—not because they have a well founded fear of persecution, but because they want to better the economic lot of themselves and their families. Hong Kong cannot continue to accept that situation.

EC Commissioners

16. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the accountability of Commissioners of the EC to the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: European Community Commissioners are appointed by common accord of the member states, but the main responsibility for ensuring the accountability of the Commission rests with the European Parliament. We believe that that role should be strengthened. We have put forward a number of proposals

to this effect in the political union intergovernmental conference. They have received a broad measure of support.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Minister not concerned about the Commission's power to investigate various nooks and crannies of our national life? Does he agree that, if the Dutch treaty and article 103A are adopted by a qualified majority of the Council of Ministers—which is a procedure that the Government apparently accept—the Commissioners will have the power to issue secret instructions commanding the economy of another member state? Does the Minister oppose that, or will the road to Maastricht be littered with hypocrisy?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is of course a great expert in hypocrisy, and in the Community too—because he served as a European Member of Parliament when he was last defeated as a Member of the House of Commons; no doubt he will have to return there after the next general election. The hon. Gentleman referred to the nooks and crannies of the Dutch text. It may have escaped his notice that that text was removed from the negotiations about two months ago.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of us believe that there must be no further transfer of accountability from the Westminster Government or Westminster Parliament to any institutions in Europe, unless that is approved by the British people in a referendum?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The views of this Government and of previous Governments on referendums are well known. We held a referendum on Britain's membership of the Community in order to extract the Labour party from the difficulty that it was in at the time. The result was overwhelming. I see no purpose in a further referendum on that matter—we are a parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Beggs *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the Government's unsatisfactory reply, I intend to raise that matter again on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: That loses the opportunity for the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) to ask a supplementary question.

Africa

17. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards multi-party democracy in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We welcome the fact that most countries in Africa practise, or are moving towards, multi-party democracy. We shall encourage all of them to do so, and to start and maintain good government practices.

Mr. Bottomley: Given the British Government's determination to provide official aid to democratic countries—we are seeing the emergence of a growing number of them—does my hon. Friend agree that it would be proper and popular over the next five years to halve the gap between our official aid and the United Nations target? Should not we include such a policy in our manifesto for the next general election?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not think that that is a question for me to answer from the Dispatch Box. I will say, however, that I expect all the countries that we assist to make further progress towards democracy and increased accountability: we consider that vital. Countries must also be willing to move towards multi-party democracy, and to ensure that there is a chance for dialogue to take place. When those goals are respected, we may have the opportunity to spend increasing amounts.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister confirm that Kenya and Malawi are the largest African recipients of British aid, and that both are one-party states which show no signs of progress towards multi-party democracy? In the light of that, will she review the aid programme?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman may not have noted the fact that we continue to encourage the Malawian Government to apply the principles of accountable government that they endorsed at the Harare Heads of Government meeting. Following their failure to do so, we have already cut balance of payments support for Malawi.

We have constantly stressed to the Kenyan Government the need to respect freedom of expression and the important outlets for legitimate dissent. We hope that those who have been arrested will be released immediately. We have told them that the suppression of opposing views is not the way forward, and have called for further progress towards democracy and greater public accountability.

I am encouraged by the fact that President Moi has expressed his willingness to move towards multi-party democracy, and by the recent indications that fresh general elections may be held early next year. We shall urge the continuation of all the recent moves to root out corruption in that and every other recipient of our aid.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the carefully targeted aid that she has given to Zambia in recent years. It has led to the election of President Chiluba, leader of the country's multi-party democracy movement. Does my right hon. Friend believe that, as a result, multi-party democracy will be adopted in Kenya at an early opportunity?

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot really add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). However, I pay tribute to all Zambians for the peaceful conduct of the recent multi-party election.

The Zambians have chosen their President and their Government. President Chiluba has our best wishes to help him get on with the job; we shall do our best to assist him, because the election was a fine example of the principles that we endorsed at the recent Heads of Government meeting in Harare. We hope that there will soon be great progress in Zambia.

Indonesia

18. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I have already said, the Government are seriously concerned about the shootings in East Timor on 12 November. My noble Friend the Minister of State expressed that concern to the Indonesian

ambassador on 13 November. We are urgently seeking clarification of the reports of further shootings on 15 November.

Mr. Marshall: Further to the very unsatisfactory replies that the Minister has given not only to me but, earlier, to my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), may I ask whether the Government consider the Indonesian occupation of East Timor to be illegal? Regardless of the Indonesian investigation, will the Minister tell us exactly what the Government intend to do to convey to Indonesia the message that the international community simply will not tolerate outrages such as last week's massacre of innocent mourners in East Timor?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government most certainly do not recognise the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. As I have said, we have expressed our grave concern.

Mr. Lester: My hon. Friend will know that many of us were awaiting a visit by a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to East Timor to analyse the situation there. We know now from the Portuguese Government that that delegation has been called off because of the recent tragic events in East Timor. Does my hon. Friend agree that what has happened in East Timor is the very opposite of good governance and that that ought to influence our aid programme to Indonesia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have no doubt that, in the light of developments, the Government and our Community partners will be looking at the very matters to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention.

Mr. Jacques Delors

19. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to arrange a meeting with the President of the European Commission to discuss recent comments on his views.

Mr. Hurd: No need. The President of the Commission and I hear each others views directly, across the table in EC meetings, several times a month and always, I hope, with benefit.

Mr. McWilliam: When the Secretary of State next meets the President, will he tell him why he alone, of all the Foreign Secretaries, left or right, within the European Community rejects the social charter? What is he afraid of?

Mr. Hurd: I have already explained, I think three times, in the hearing of President Delors why this Government are not prepared to put at risk the striking progress that has been made in industrial relations in this country since 1979.

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I was called by you on Question 16, only to be discourteously interrupted by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), will you refer to the Procedure Committee whether or not such an interruption should be permitted as a means of closing a question, or whether Members should be afforded the courtesy of asking their question, after such an interruption, when Question Time ends?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to refer that matter to the Select Committee. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to do so, he should do that himself. May I draw to his attention, and to the attention of the whole House, page 296 of "Erskine May"? It is clearly stated there that, if the hon. Member who originated the question rises and states that he intends to seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment, that is the end of that particular question.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Ms. Joyce Quin
Mr. Hugo Summerson
Sir Bernard Braine

European Community (Intergovernmental Conferences)

[FIRST DAY]

[Relevant document: Minutes of Evidence taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on 19th November (House of Commons Paper 35-i)]

Mr. Speaker: Before we begin this important debate, let me say that well over 60 right hon. and hon. Members have applied in writing to participate in it today. Sadly, it may not be possible to call them all, but I shall do my best, provided speeches are brief. I propose to place a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock. I hope that those who are called before 7 o'clock and those who are called after 9 o'clock will bear that limit in mind in the interests of their colleagues, as the debate is to continue until midnight.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, several amendments have been tabled. I understand that under Standing Order No. 9, as amended by Standing Order No. 14, you can select only one amendment because the motion has to be voted on after 10 o'clock. Nothing else is to be voted on after 10 o'clock. Can you confirm that if an amendment to an amendment were tabled and were to be considered suitable by you for voting on, should it be voted on before 10 o'clock the amendment could then be voted on after 10 o'clock, as well as the substantive motion? That would enable the House to have a clearer division on ideas than is apparent from the two Front-Bench motions.

Mr. Speaker: That would be possible if I had selected the amendment, but it is hypothetical because no such amendment is on the Order Paper.

3.34 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I beg to move,

That this House, believing it is in Britain's interests to continue to be at the heart of the European Community and able to shape its future and that of Europe as a whole, endorses the constructive negotiating approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government in the Inter-Governmental Conferences on Economic and Monetary Union and on Political Union; and urges them to work for an agreement at the forthcoming European Council at Maastricht which avoids the development of a federal Europe, enables this country to exert the greatest influence on the economic evolution of the Community while preserving the right of Parliament to decide at a future date whether to adopt a single currency, on issues of Community competence concentrates the development of action on those issues which cannot be handled more effectively at national level and, in particular, avoids intrusive Community measures in Social areas which are matters for national decision, develops a European security policy compatible with NATO and co-operation in foreign policy which safeguards this country's national interests, increases the accountability of the Commission, enhances the rule of law in the Community including improved implementation, enforcement and compliance with Community legislation, improves co-operation between European governments in the fight against drugs, terrorism and cross-border crime, and through these policies secures the long-term interests of the United Kingdom.

The European Council in Maastricht is set to decide issues which are crucial to the future of the European Community and to Britain's role as a leading member of it. This afternoon I would like to set out what is at stake, the parameters of what we can accept and also what we cannot accept.

I shall deal, first, with a misconception that is held by some of our Community partners. They believe that Britain may argue hard against many of the proposals—object to them and protest—but that then we shall sign up to whatever is on offer at the 59th minute of the 11th hour. I urge them not to make that misjudgment; it would be fatal.

The Government want to reach an agreement at Maastricht. We are negotiating for one. There is still some way to go and I hope that we will be successful, but it may be that a deal is genuinely unobtainable. If we do not reach an agreement, it will be a setback. So it must not be through misunderstanding, or misjudgment, and certainly not through bad faith. Therefore, this afternoon I will make our position clear.

For historical, geographical and political reasons, the issue of membership of the European Community has been more controversial in Britain perhaps than in any other member state. We joined the Community late, and we joined a Community whose rules were drawn up by the original members and not by us. The structure of the Community's budget meant that only two countries—Britain and Germany—were net contributors. The common agricultural policy was designed to benefit those countries with small and often inefficient farmers. It took time, effort and controversy to redress some of those imbalances. My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) secured a more equitable budget arrangement, and now we have started on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

Those issues have often obscured the benefits to Britain of the European Community. The first and perhaps overriding benefit is the contribution which the Community has made to democracy, stability and prosperity in post-war Europe. The Community is unique in having its own framework of law that is binding on member states. That framework of law is changing, not least to enable us to create the world's largest single market. Prior to the Single European Act, we were at a disadvantage. Britain had removed most of the barriers which stood in the way of countries wanting to export to us, but the reverse in no sense was the case. We often faced barriers to the export of our goods to other Community countries.

It is because of our membership of the Community that Nissan cars, made in Sunderland, can be sold freely in continental Europe. Seventy-five per cent. of the Sunderland factory's production went for export last year.

It is because of Community law that we shall be able to sell our financial, banking and insurance services freely throughout the Community. It is thanks to the collective strength of the Community that we can negotiate a good deal for Britain in international trade negotiations with the United States and Japan.

Those are all positive advantages. They illustrate very clearly why the countries of the European Free Trade Association, none of them economic slouches, have just done a deal with the Community. That agreement gives them the benefits of the European single market. In exchange, they have had to accept our regulations and our standards without having any say in framing them. Most of them now want membership of the Community to give them that equal say in framing the Community's laws.

There are, in truth, only three ways of dealing with the Community: we can leave it, and no doubt we would survive, but we would be diminished in influence and in prosperity; we can stay in it grudgingly, in which case others will lead it; or we can play a leading role in it, and that is the right policy. It does not mean accepting every idea that is marketed with a European label. It does mean trying to build the sort of Europe that we believe in, and I will turn specifically to that in the course of my remarks.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I would like to make a little progress. I have much to say in order to cover the points in which the House will be interested.

At the Luxembourg European Council in June, draft texts on monetary union and political union were produced that had huge deficiencies but which did recognise many of our concerns. In September, a new Dutch text on political union appeared. That was quite unacceptable and we rejected it. It was withdrawn, and replaced a few days ago. These early texts have caused much alarm about proposals that this country would and could never have accepted.

I will turn first to the treaty articles on economic and monetary union. The treaty of Rome defines as its goal the achievement of

"an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe."

In 1972, the Heads of Government of the Community—and of Britain, Ireland and Denmark, who were about to join—agreed the objective of the

"progressive realisation of Economic and Monetary Union".

That goal was enshrined in the preamble to the Single European Act, but these goals were never defined.

The treaty now before us envisages the realisation of economic and monetary union through the creation of a single European currency to replace the historic currencies and a European central bank to manage monetary policy.

In stage 1 the single market and single financial area will be completed; competition will be strengthened; capital movements liberalised; and the greatest possible number of currencies will join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. The United Kingdom is fully committed to stage 1 which began on 1 July 1990. The substantive provisions of the treaty apply to the second and third stages of economic and monetary union. It is here that we begin to run into the areas of greatest difficulty and controversy in much of the negotiation before us.

In the second stage, the text proposes to establish a European monetary institute, essentially the present meeting of European central bank governors under another name. Its task would be to strengthen the co-operation between the member states' central banks and to promote the co-ordination of monetary policy. In stage 2, the European currency unit would be developed and hardened. During the whole of this period, monetary policy would remain entirely in the hands of member states. The European monetary institute would have a consultative and advisory role, and that alone.

The present stage envisages that, before the end of 1996, the member states of the Community would take stock, in the Economic and Finance Council and in the European Council, and reach a decision as to whether to move to the final stage of economic and monetary union. A crucial element in the decision whether or not to move to stage 3 would be the economic convergence of the member states. We were the first country to argue that convergence was vital before monetary union could even become a possibility. That view is now accepted by our partners. The latest text sets out strict convergence criteria on inflation, on interest rates, on successful membership of the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism and on the avoidance of excessive budget deficits.

The Council of Ministers would decide who has met the conditions, and the European Council would decide unanimously whether or not the conditions were right for a move to stage 3. We believe that there should be at least eight member states ready to move to stage 3 before that step could be taken.

Our insistence that there should be no imposition of a single currency is well known: by that we mean that we cannot commit ourselves now to entry at a later date as a result of the treaty. We are therefore insisting that there must be a provision in the treaty giving us the right, quite separately from any European Council decision, to decide for ourselves whether or not to move to stage 3. That decision can be taken only by this House.

That means that, even if the requisite majority of member states decide to embrace full economic and monetary union with a single currency and a single central bank, Britain will not be obliged to do so. Whether to join—not just when to join—will be matters of separate decision by Government and by Parliament. Nothing in the treaty that I sign will bind us now to the decision that we must take then. Nothing in the treaty that I sign now will bind us then, because at this stage we cannot know what the circumstances then will be and whether it will be in the economic interests of this country to take part.

Mr. Beith: Is not the Prime Minister now outlining a fourth option, which is that Britain remains a member of the European Community, but excludes itself from the development of the single currency, and thereby excludes itself from being the financial centre of Europe and from gaining the full advantages of membership?

The Prime Minister: Expressly not. I am outlining circumstances that mean that we would decide to join provided the circumstances were right and that the House thought it was right. We are not committing ourselves to joining now without knowing the circumstances, without knowing the conditions, and without knowing what economic chaos it might lead to.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Can the Prime Minister see any advantages for Britain in joining a European single currency?

The Prime Minister: I shall come to those points in a few moments.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I have given way twice already. I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

One of the most sensitive issues in this debate is the conduct of the United Kingdom's fiscal policy—the powers to tax, borrow and spend. It is common ground that excessive budget deficits should be avoided and that the absence of such deficits should be a convergence condition for moving to stage 3. It is also agreed that there should be no legally binding budget deficit ceilings and sanctions in stage 2.

[The Prime Minister]

For stage 2, the treaty would provide for a formal process whereby the ECOFIN council can, on the basis of a Commission report, examine any state's economic policy and budgetary position. If it finds a budget deficit to be excessive, it can make non-binding policy recommendations. While the arrangements for prompting a Commission report would be an innovation in the text, the other powers of examination and recommendation are not. The Council can do that now—and it does.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Dutch draft as it now stands says, in paragraph 1 of clause 104B, that countries "shall not"—I repeat, "shall not"—have an excessive budget deficit, which is then defined? Clearly that wording needs to be amended.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend. We have made it clear to our partners that we are still negotiating on that point and that we have not accepted that binding element in stage 2. As my right hon. Friend will see in a moment, we shall go further in terms of our position on binding deficits subsequently in stage 3.

Where we part company from some other member states is on stage 3. The Dutch draft treaty provides the ECOFIN Council with legally binding powers, backed up by sanctions, to require a member state to reduce its deficit. We consider that there is no better sanction than the market, and we will continue so to argue in the intergovernmental conference.

There are some hon. Members who say—I respect the feeling behind this—that the creation of a single currency and a European central bank should be blocked now. They believe that, if it is not, the pressures on us to join at a later stage will be irresistible. I am not of their view. It is true that, technically, we could block the adoption of an economic and monetary union treaty in its present form —that is, as an amendment to the treaty of Rome.

What we could not do is to prevent some or all of the other eleven member states making a separate treaty on their own outside the treaty of Rome. Those who argue that they would not do so are mistaken. They are as mistaken as those who said that, without Britain, the original Community would never happen, or that if it did, it would amount to nothing. I fear that I do not agree with hon. Members who take that view. I believe that they are wrong, and potentially damagingly wrong for the long-term interests of Britain.

Mr. Sillars: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for a moment.

Therefore, I do not believe that it would be right to block the treaty on economic and monetary union, provided that it contains within it the conditions that could make such a union a success. Nor is it necessary to do so to safeguard our own interests. For the text gives this country the crucial provision that we need, which means that we can decide at a time of our own choosing whether to join or not.

Mr. Sillars: Let us imagine that we proceeded down the road that the Prime Minister describes. The other countries create a single currency, the ecu. This Parliament decides not to become involved. Would sterling then float free, or would it be forced to shadow the ecu? If it is forced to shadow the ecu, what is the point of remaining out?

The Prime Minister: That is one of the matters which have been discussed only in preliminary form. It is likely that sterling would have a relationship with the ecu, but that is not yet determined, because the treaty is not yet concluded. It is precisely for that reason that we are still negotiating both in ECOFIN and at the European Council.

If the convergence conditions set out in the draft treaty are not met, we would certainly not wish to be part of an economic and monetary union with a single currency. But if they are met, our successors may wish to take a different view. A single currency could be the means of safeguarding anti-inflationary policies for the whole of the European Community. That would be a great prize. But the House knows that there is a price to pay for that prize. The price is that it would take from national Governments the control of monetary policy. That would be a very significant political and economic step for Britain to take. We cannot take that step now, but nor should we exclude it.

We have in front of us not, as it has been described, an opt-out clause but a clause that we have secured which enables us to opt in—if we wish, when we wish, and in conditions that we judge to be right. I believe that we should keep open that option and not foreclose it now.

In many respects, the treaty on political union poses starker problems. We are committed under the treaty of Rome to

"ever closer union among the peoples of Europe".

Under the Single European Act, the member states of the Community agreed

"to transform relations as a whole among their states into a European union".

The purpose of the new treaty text is to define what political union means in practical, legal terms.

For many of our Community partners the definitions are not as important as they are for us. For many of them the diminution of the power of national Governments and national Parliaments is not an issue. They accept the idea of a European federation. We have never done so. When we joined, we accepted that Community law would take precedence over national law, but for that very reason we have always been concerned about the scope of Community law—precisely because it took precedence. In these negotiations, we have shown ourselves ready to discuss individual changes in the role of the Community where these are in the national interest, but we are not prepared to accept wholesale changes in the nature of the Community which would lead it towards an unacceptable dominance over our national life.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am sure that the Prime Minister accepts that the Germans are as interested in their national interest as we are in ours. Why, then, does he believe that the Germans want to move so quickly towards a federal Europe?

The Prime Minister: The Germans have a different political history and structure from the one that we have in the House. It is for Germany to make its judgment. It is for the Government and this House to make the

judgment that we believe is right for Britain. We should not be bound by what other countries think is right for them.

It is against that background that we approach the political union treaty with its implications for our national sovereignty. Unlike the provisions on economic and monetary union, these provisions can be adopted only if all 12 member states and their Parliaments agree. That safeguard is there to be used if it needs to be used.

There are many definitions of what federation means, but to most people in this country the notion of a Federal Europe leads over time to a European Government and Parliament with full legislative powers, to which national Governments and Parliaments are subordinate. I do not believe that that is a road down which the country would wish to go. We will not therefore accept a treaty which describes the Community as having a federal vocation. Such a Community will not succeed.

Let me set out the main elements of the political union treaty, and our attitude to them. First of all is the treaty's structure. The first Dutch text in September brought all the elements of the treaty under a single structure—a unitary structure. That would have brought foreign policy, defence policy, interior policy and justice policy under the treaty of Rome and within the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. It would have been a massive stride towards a centralised federal structure.

Such a treaty may be popular with some of our European partners, but it is unthinkable for us. We made that clear, and those provisions have now been withdrawn.

The new treaty text would create what have become known as separate pillars. Some elements of our co-operation with our Community partners will come with the existing framework of Community law. Other elements of co-operation—notably on foreign and security policy, and against crime and terrorism—would be conducted on an intergovernmental basis. So, too, would co-operation in dealing with immigration and asylum. Those elements would be outside the treaty of Rome and outside the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. This means that there would be no supranational authority to adjudicate on the decisions taken by member states.

Those changes are welcome. The countries of the European Community would be able to co-operate within a legal framework, but the European Court would not be involved; the Commission would not have the sole right to make proposals. Those changes represent a significant step forward towards practical, more flexible arrangements.

We began co-operation in foreign policy, security and defence on an intergovernmental treaty basis, and we did so as a result of the Single European Act. Co-operation in foreign policy with our partners in the Community is in the interests of this country. On most issues, we carry more clout collectively than we would alone. It has therefore been a successful policy.

Under the Single European Act, we strengthened our co-operation by introducing the concept of joint action. That will continue under the new treaty. The text proposes that joint action, once determined by consensus, would be binding on all member states. Decisions on what should constitute joint action would be taken by unanimity, but it is proposed that detailed decisions, putting a decision of principle into practice, would be taken by a majority of member states.

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that question?

The Prime Minister: I have not quite finished the point, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. He may not then wish to interrupt.

I see merit in joint action and in that joint action being carried out by member states. For example, were we to take a decision, as 12 member states, to impose sanctions on a country, it would be damaging for one member state to abrogate those sanctions unilaterally. In most areas it would be in our interest to work for joint action, but we cannot allow the search for joint action to inhibit our right to take separate national decisions essential for the pursuit of our foreign policy. Where we can act together, we will do so. Where we need to act on our own, we must be free to do so. Even where joint action has been agreed, there must be provision for a member state to act separately and unilaterally if it decided that its vital interests required it to do so.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: The text proposes that majority voting should be used for implementing decisions. We see great difficulties in that proposal. What, for example, is the difference between a decision of principle taken by unanimity and an implementing decision to be taken by majority vote? None of our partners has yet found a satisfactory answer to that question.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

The Prime Minister: That seems to be a recipe for muddle and confusion. The onus must be on those who want to change the existing arrangements to justify that change. Thus far they have not managed to do so.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have declined to give way to him and I do not propose to change my mind.

On defence, the position is clear. We have in NATO the means of our defence. At the recent summit, all the members of NATO were clear that we must do nothing to call in question the continuing American and Canadian presence in Europe. Europe should undoubtedly do more for its own defence, but we do not need to invent a new structure for that to happen. We need to develop a policy that is consistent with our existing obligations and arrangements through NATO and the Western European Union.

It is for that reason that Britain and Italy put forward proposals which would build up the WEU, not as the European alternative to NATO, but as the European pillar of NATO. We would establish close links between the WEU and the European Union. We can discuss security issues in the European Council, but we cannot accept a situation in which the European Community would effectively set up a competing security structure.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Wilkinson: May I say how much I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement today that WEU is to be the European pillar of NATO, that we should fully

[Mr. Wilkinson]

contribute to WEU and to NATO, and that there should be no incompatability between them? As he has dealt with many matters in detail, can he say what the aims and objectives of Her Majesty's Government will be at Maastrict?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly say to my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The Government's aims at Maastricht on that point are entirely clear. They are to build up the WEU and to ensure that it has an adequate relationship with NATO and the European Council but is not subordinate to either NATO or the European Council. That point was made perfectly clear after the NATO summit, and I am happy to reiterate it today.

Europe should undoubtedly do more for its own defence. It is for that reason that Britain and Italy put forward proposals which would build up the WEU substantially. We would establish close links between the WEU and the European Union, precisely as my hon. Friend expected me to indicate a moment ago. We can discuss security issues, but we cannot under any circumstances have any shred of subordination of the WEU to the European Council. There is no case for making the WEU subordinate to the European Council. We cannot and will not accept any treaty that contains such provisions.

Sir Patrick Duffy: The Prime Minister properly recognises that the British-Italian proposal satisfies the essential tests of complementarity and lack of duplication, and therefore is entirely compatible with NATO and the continued presence of the United States in Europe. He has not mentioned the competing Franco-German proposal. Is not that still on the European security agenda?

The Prime Minister: The Franco-German proposal suffered a considerable rebuff as a result of the meeting on NATO in Rome some time ago.

As I expressly said a moment ago, we cannot accept a treaty that requires the Western European Union to be subordinate to the European Council—that is the essential core element of the Franco-German paper. It follows, therefore, that we do not accept the provisions of that paper, but we do accept those of the Anglo-Italian paper, which would lead to the arrangements that I described to the House.

We must not get into the habit of thinking that all European development has to take place through the European Community. I know that there are many in Europe who want to set everything in a Community legal framework, for fear that, if they do not, old nationalisms may reassert themselves, but that is not our view. We want to work more closely with our partners, but that co-operation does not always have to be in the same fixed framework. We have to find patterns of co-operation which work, and that may frequently be on an intergovernmental basis rather than in a full Community framework.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): May I ask an essential question with which the Prime Minister has not yet dealt? Even with the reservations that the right hon. Gentleman has set out, which will be studied with great care, the changes that he proposes are fundamental in character and will affect parliamentary democracy itself. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that partnership with Europe must be paralleled by partnership with the British people? He has placed much emphasis on the citizen's choice and the citizens charter—the people's right to hold accountable those who have power over them. Are not the British people entitled to give the final verdict on whatever emerges from Maastricht?

The Prime Minister: As I said at Question Time yesterday, I do not favour the idea of a referendum, which underlies the right hon. Gentleman's question. I do not favour referendums in a parliamentary democracy, despite the arguments that others have advanced.

The role of the European Parliament is one of the most difficult issues in the development of the Community. There are widely differing views about it. Some believe that it should have the power to initiate legislation. We do not believe that. Many member states would like to give the European Parliament an effective power of co-decision, to make it an equal partner with the Council in determining Community law. We cannot agree to that. The Council of Ministers, whose members are answerable to their national Parliaments, must be the body which ultimately determines the Community's laws and policies. But the European Parliament is elected. From its inception it has had the power to block the budget, to sack the Commission, to propose amendments to Community legislation, and to give assent to certain international agreements. Its powers were increased by the Single European Act.

If we are to control the growth of Community law, it is essential that we have democratic control. National Parliaments, this Parliament in particular, have played a crucial role in that, and will continue to do so. I pay tribute to the Scrutiny Committee and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has chaired it with tireless skill. That work must continue.

Under the treaty of Rome, the European Commission has sole power of initiative for Community legislation. It also has certain independent powers—for example, supervising the implementation of Community law and initiating legal action against states thought to be in breach of it. Yet the Commission is unelected and largely unaccountable.

The Government would like to see the European Parliament given a greater role in monitoring the Commission and in scrutinising its role as the implementing authority of Council decisions. The Parliament should have a greater role in auditing the Community's expenditure. We would be willing to see the Parliament's links with the citizens who elected it strengthened through the appointment of a Community ombudsman directly answerable to the Parliament.

The European Parliament already has the power to dismiss the Commission. We are willing to see it take a greater role by approving the appointment of the Commission, although we do not think it right to give the Parliament the power of dismissing individual Commissioners. Those who favour the idea argue that it would lead to greater efficiency within the Commission. I am more inclined to believe that it would be likely to lead to a witch hunt against those Commissioners who carry out their duties without fear or favour.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How would the Prime Minister envisage arbitration between a Government and the Commission on thorny problems such as additionality and RECHAR, which is affecting all our constituencies?

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for the Government to discuss bilaterally, not a matter to put in the treaty.

At an earlier stage, some member states were preparing to give the European Parliament far-reaching powers to impose its will on the Council of Ministers. We could not accept that, and we have secured radical changes that take us a long way from co-decision. The latest Dutch presidency text would give the European Parliament a more limited right to block certain Commission proposals once they had been adopted by the Council of Ministers. The Dutch presidency envisages applying this principally to those subjects to which majority voting was extended under the Single European Act. We are prepared to consider some blocking power for the European Parliament, but it must cover a far narrower range than that set out in the present Presidency text.

There is a tendency for the Community to want to legislate over a wide area. That tendency needs to be curbed [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That is the essence of what has become known as subsidiarity. I am aware that different people view it in different ways, but what subsidiarity must mean is that, if a problem can be dealt with at national level, it should be. If it can be dealt with at international level only, it should be. At international level we must then decide whether a problem is best tackled by the Community—which means the Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Court of Justice—or by co-operation between Governments. We are looking to enshrine that principle of subsidiarity in the treaty.

There are areas where Community law must apply. A single market can work only if there are common standards. We need to know that our goods can compete on equal terms when we export. We want to be confident that imports meet safety standards.

There is no point in one country having one standard of river pollution and another country another. Pollution of the Rhine is equally damaging to France and to Germany, not to mention other North sea states. Majority voting was introduced in this area under the Single European Act and it could be extended under the new treaty, but there must be limits to this action. Whether a town bypass goes to the east or to the west has nothing whatsoever to do with cross-frontier pollution or competition policy or any other aspect of the single market. Those are issues that should rightly be settled at national level.

So too are matters relating to industrial practice, union relations and wage bargaining. We will not agree to extensions of Community competence which have nothing to do with fair competition but which would undermine the hard-won ability of industry to compete. Some claim that such measures would be in the interests of the working people, but in truth, they would not. One example under existing competence is the working time directive. That would make it illegal to work for more than 48 hours a week. It would add £5 billion a year to the costs incurred by industry. It would cost jobs. It would interfere in the right of individuals to decide how long they work, and it would inhibit their ability to earn for themselves and their families. We certainly do not wish to extend competence in this area.

In health, it may be right for the Community to complement national programmes through co-operative research and collaborative health campaigns, but the basic provision of health care is a matter for the national Government. So too for education. It is right for the Community to ensure mutual recognition of qualifications; it should promote student exchange and language training; but it cannot have a place in determining national educational curricula.

Significant extensions of Community competence were agreed in the Single European Act. Other extensions have happened by a gradual process of accretion. It makes sense therefore to codify and ring-fence Community competence, but the Dutch text goes much further than is justified by any of the criteria I have set out. We shall therefore seek to curb the proposed extensions of Community competence either by cutting out some of the proposals altogether or by ensuring in other cases that decisions can be taken only by unanimity.

Our present system of frontier controls helps protect this country from not only crime but illegal immigration, drugs, and terrorism. It would be irresponsible to weaken our controls, and we are not prepared to do so, but in the fight against international crime we need the maximum international co-operation, exchange of information and joint action. The Twelve are considering the creation of a European version of Interpol to bring our co-operation together on a coherent basis. I welcome that proposal. It is a classic case for intergovernmental co-operation between the countries of the Community rather than for co-operation within the framework of Community law. It is an area where Governments, not the Commission, have expertise. I hope that Europol can be established at the European Council at Maastricht on an intergovernmental basis.

For an agreement to be reached at Maastricht, there will have to be give and take on all sides. I have set out for the House the most crucial points.

On EMU, there must be strict economic convergence, and a provision that will allow this country to decide whether, not just when, to join a single currency.

On political union, we must safeguard NATO and avoid the creation of competing European defence structures.

We will co-operate in foreign policy, but that co-operation must not interfere with our ability to take decisions on our own national interests.

We must include powers for the European Parliament that give it greater control over the Commission but do not allow the Parliament to become an equal of the Council in making policy for the Community.

We must constrain the extension of Community competence to those areas where Community action makes more sense than national action or action on a voluntary, intergovernmental basis.

The Community has been the motor force of Europe's post-war development. The aim from the beginning was to achieve far-reaching goals by down-to-earth means. The goals were democracy, prosperity and stability in Europe. The means were the creation of a single market in goods and services.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No.

Today, the Community is still the motor force for Europe's development, but there is more at stake in Maastricht than the legal text that we shall have before us. In recent months, we have seen tumultuous changes in our continent.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

At Maastricht in December, we shall shape the future of the Community. We must shape it in ways that will accommodate those wider European changes. Our overriding aim must remain democracy, stability and prosperity in Europe, but our responsibility is now wider than just to the existing members of the Community. It must also be to all the other European countries which are now returning to democracy for the first time in 50 years. Our door must be open to them.

We must prepare for the day when the EFTA countries in the north of Europe and the new democracies in the east of Europe want to become part of the Community. When they are economically ready to join the Community, we must be ready to accept them; and we must tell them so now.

We can now plan for a European Community stretching north to the Baltic and east to the Urals—a Community that embraces the free market principles that are at the heart of the treaty of Rome. Such a Europe would be more than an economic entity. It would not only guarantee prosperity, but would underpin democracy. It would put an end to centuries of mistrust, suspicion and war. It would secure a lasting peace across the whole of our continent. I believe that that is a Europe worth building and worth making sacrifices for. That is the Europe for which I shall argue at Maastricht.

I commend that Europe and this motion to the House.

4.19 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'regrets that Her Majesty's Government's preoccupation with divisions in its own Party has meant that in the Inter-Governmental Conferences it has not taken the negotiating approach necessary to ensure that the United Kingdom exercises decisive influence on the future of the Community in ways which will help to advance the living and working standards of the people of this country in company with other peoples of Europe; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to work for an agreement at the European Council which ensures inclusion of the Social Charter, qualified majority voting on social and environmental matters, powers for the European Parliament to hold the Commission to account in ways that complement the role of national parliaments, decision-making at the level—local, regional, national or Community—where maximum democratic control is at all times exercised, foreign and security policy co-operation without the development of a European Community military role, widening of the Community as rapidly as practicable, co-operation to combat terrorism and other crime, and strengthened powers for ECOFIN as the politically responsible counterpart to any European Central Bank system; and urges the Government to work to secure agreement to, and adopt policies for, high levels of employment, sustainable non-inflationary growth, balanced regional and national economic development and social cohesion, and for the fundamental reform of the CAP, in order to achieve real economic convergence in the years leading to economic and monetary union and a single currency as the essential foundation for those changes and to safeguard the long-term interests of the people of the United Kingdom.'.

The background to this debate, and clearly the cause of this debate, involves the great change—or different kinds of change—taking place across the continent of Europe and within the European Community. The basic question at issue in the debate is whether the United Kingdom is to be carried along in the wake of those changes or to be a driving force for change. It is essential that our country takes a lead. That is the only way to exert the decisive influence over the direction and nature of the economic, political and social development under way in Europe. The British people know that; they are well aware of the dangers of Britain being in a second division in Europe, and they do not want to be left behind.

The need for an active and positive approach to change is well understood by Governments in the rest of the Community. They recognise the reality of the economic interdependence that now exists and which will be intensified by the completion of the single market. As a result, they are determined to build on that interdependence by moving towards economic and monetary union. They are clear about their objectives; they know what they want. This Government most certainly are not clear.

"As so often in the past, our Government are stuck in the defensive mud. Grabbing a begrudged compromise here; clutching an opt-out clause there. Devoting maximum diplomatic effort to dilution and delay. This is a dreary, demeaning and ultimately self-defeating posture. It is playing for a draw."

I am grateful to the *Daily Mail* for that accurate description of the Government's attitude. It is not good enough for our country to have a Government who are playing for a draw. It became clear as the Prime Minister's speech progressed that that is precisely the most that he is playing for.

The country cannot be properly served by a Government who pretend that they can somehow call a halt to or defer the agreed purpose of the rest of the Community. As the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) advised everyone in the *Financial Times* last week,

"There is nothing to prevent a group of countries pressing on with a separate Treaty . . . The fact is that we cannot, even if we wished, stop the others going ahead."

The Government must face that reality and its implications squarely, but they have not. They must stop trying to persuade themselves or the country that some sort of semi-detached arrangement can be made that will serve Britain's interests—there is no such arrangement. Anyone who thinks there is should simply consider what our country's position would be if our neighbours and trading partners formed a monetary union and, even though economic convergence had been achieved, Britain stayed outside. The Prime Minister refused to answer that question, which was asked by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). The implications of the Government staying out of a union when they had decided, on the basis of convergence, to form one, are serious and potentially disastrous.

More immediately, before those years pass and there is any immediate prospect of monetary union, it must be recognised how vulnerable Britain would be if the Government's strategy were to avoid commitment to the process under way in the European Community. That is

not a theoretical matter, but a practical issue. If a British Government continued, as a matter of policy, to stand apart from the process, would inward investors who need access to markets of the whole community think of locating in a semi-detached country?

The Prime Minister referred to Nissan at Sunderland. Everyone in the House must want further inward investment and the development that comes with it. In the intervening period between Maastricht and the further stages, the Prime Minister and the Government must face the fact that, if they are standing apart, they will put a question mark over the prospect of further investment and further development.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The right hon. Gentleman spoke a short while ago of consistency and clarity. A few seconds ago, he mentioned inward investment and a Japanese company. I do not recall that that was always his keenest and most enthusiastic point. In 1972, when he and I were both in the House, I voted in favour of the European Communities Bill, as it then was, and the right hon. Gentleman voted against it. In 1974, I opposed the referendum on Europe when he was in favour of it. Will the right hon. Gentleman give the House one example—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Adley: Will the Leader of the Opposition give the House one example of one major issue since 1970 to this very afternoon on which he has not changed his mind, purely for the electors' convenience, that relates to the European Community?

Mr. Kinnock: Immediately the hon. Gentleman and I entered the House—on the same day—I formed the view that he was a jerk, and I still hold that view.

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us settle down. This is a very important debate that is being listened to outside the House. I am not sure—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]—whether "jerk" is an entirely parliamentary expression. I have heard worse things here. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will refine his reference to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kinnock: The question to which the Government must respond——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This gives a very bad impression to those outside the House.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to insult an hon. Member by calling him a jerk?

Mr. Speaker: I have just said that I think that "jerk" is not among the list of unparliamentary expressions but I asked the Leader of the Opposition to refine it. Perhaps he will now do so.

Mr. Kinnock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question that the Government must answer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]—if they are to maintain their position—*[Interruption.]* If the Tory party demonstrates its great nervousness by its attempts to disrupt, the whole country will form an accurate opinion—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let the House settle down. I said to the Leader of the Opposition that "jerk" is not on the list of unparliamentary expressions but, bearing in mind the nature of this debate, it would help the House if he refined what he has said in the interests of good order.

Mr. Kinnock: I respect you, Mr. Speaker, and I respect the House. If the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) is offended, though I doubt it, I withdraw any offence.

The question that the Government must answer is whether, if they were to maintain their stand-back attitude and what they call their options, British investors—not simply inward investors—who want to sell their produce throughout the Community and the rest of Europe would give priority to investing and developing in Britain when they had every reason to believe that the Government were ever ready to withdraw from the European process. That is the real problem.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Get on with it.

Mr. Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman has an incurable problem, so I cannot help him.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The House will be grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, because he has been making a clear statement and drawing a clear distinction between the two sides of the House. May we take it from what he has said that he is saying definitely that he would be prepared at Maastricht to make an irrevocable commitment to a single currency? That is what he is saying.

Mr. Kinnock: I am coming to that precise point. It is interesting that the Chancellor should anticipate it, and I am sure that he will find the answer very satisfactory indeed. He will also discover that my desire—indeed, my absolute commitment—to ensuring that the House has a proper decision to make at any stage of development in the EC is at least equal to his. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will Conservative Members now please settle down? The Prime Minister was heard in silence, and I expect the same courtesy to be extended to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kinnock: The problem of the Government demonstrating a commitment to the continuing process in the EC is highlighted by the so-called opt-out clause. I understand that the Prime Minister wants to call it the opt-in clause. That is an interesting literary distinction, but I do not think that it is much more than that. As there is no possibility of any Government in the Community, certainly no British Government and certainly no Labour Government, not referring to their Parliament for a mandate before taking a step into entering monetary union, the opt-out clause simply codifies what will happen in any case, I believe, in every single one of the European Community democracies.

If that clause was taken to be a definition of the Government's position and repeatedly referred to as an escape route, which appears to be the intention, it would

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fundamentally undermine confidence in the Government's commitment to the European process. It would be a deterrent to investment and a disincentive to industrial development. That is a matter of basic practical issues, of jobs and of prosperity. Opting out would mean losing out. That is not an issue for some distant day in 1996 or 1998.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that what he has said is not correct. Other countries are prepared to give a commitment that they will move to a single currency without reference back to their domestic Parliaments. We are not prepared to do that, and that provision will not be in the treaty unless we ask for it. Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that he would give a commitment on any terms less than those that we are prepared to give? That is a question that he has not answered.

Mr. Kinnock: I would not be giving evidence of bad faith by looking for an opt-out clause—and the reason is that, unlike the Prime Minister, I do not have to try to patch my party together.

The issue of the strength of the Government's commitment to the process is not one to be kept until 1996 or 1998, but must be faced by the Government now—not with devices to mollify the rival factions in the Conservative party, but with a determination to promote the opportunities for, and the living and working standards of, the people of this country.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Kinnock: No, I will not give way. There have been a few interventions.

The divisions in the Conservative party have already undermined the Government's position in their negotiations at the intergovernmental conferences. Every other Government in the European Community know that, for months past, the British Government's negotiating energies have been directed not at shaping the future of the Community but at papering over the cracks in the Tory party.

The Prime Minister must, even at this late date, put country before party. In the 20 negotiating days that remain before Maastricht, the Prime Minister must work for a treaty that will serve the best interests of Britain, and in doing so serve the wider interests of the Community. The right hon. Gentleman can do that by negotiating a more practical approach to the co-ordination of economic policies within the European Community.

Would it be right to conclude from the Prime Minister's remarks about the limitations on deficits that he completely rejects the 3 per cent. limit? Would it be right to conclude from his remarks also that in place of the stipulations that exist—which are much too rigid and impractical to be accepted—he would allow the co-ordination of deficits by the market? Would it not then be the case that the market would have a form of control —indeed, sovereignty—that would not work to the advantage of the Community generally or of Britain specifically? It would be useful if the Prime Minister intervened to tell the House precisely what formula he had in mind for the limitation of fiscal deficits.

In a reply to me in July, the Prime Minister recognised that there was a need to achieve "flexibility" in responding to changing economic circumstances. Is that what he has been seeking to negotiate in the references that he made to the limitations on deficits? There is widespread interest in that aspect, and I am sorry that the Prime Minister does not take this opportunity to make clear what should be a very straightforward point.

The Prime Minister: I have done so already, expressly and explicitly, in my speech—as the right hon. Gentleman would know if he had listened.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sorry, but the Prime Minister—I am sure without any intention—is not right about the way that he expressed himself on that point. However, the House will have further opportunities during the debate to clarify that important point.

The Government should be negotiating on the basic question of the European central bank, to ensure that, in the Prime Minister's words to me,

"a European central bank . . . would . . . be accountable to a directly elected body."

I understand that the Government have not been negotiating for that. They should have been negotiating over the location of the European monetary institute and of a subsequent European central bank in the City of London, but they have never even raised those questions, despite the fact that, of all the countries of the European Community, the location of the central bank has much the greatest importance for Britain.

Our economy has a substantial financial services sector, which would be greatly disadvantaged if the central bank were located anywhere in the Community other than in this country and in London. The Government should be fighting hard, especially given the importance to the economy generally, and of jobs in particular, to ensure that the bank's location is established even as the European monetary institute is established.

Above all, the Prime Minister and the Government should be negotiating for the inclusion of a wider and more positive concept of economic convergence in the treaty than any that has yet emerged.

As the Prime Minister said,

"convergence would certainly mean bringing the European economies closer together."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 25.]

He meant in regard to "growth" and "performance", as well as in regard to "inflation" and "fiscal deficits". I agreed with that definition when the Prime Minister offered it in the House in July. That is the position from which he should be negotiating, but he has not started to do so yet.

The treaty definition of convergence is, of course, of crucial importance to the whole process of monetary union. The Government should be negotiating to gain full recognition of the fact that monetary union and a single currency could work successfully only if there were convergence in the real economic performance of countries: convergence in terms of growth and employment, as well as in terms of inflation and interest rates. No one can be satisfied with the present position. British and German inflation rates have moved together, but the German economy is growing at a rate of 3·5 per cent., while the British economy is in recession and shrinking by 2·5 per cent. Real convergence would mean similar and sustained growth rates, as well as similar inflation rates.

If that real convergence is to be achieved, it will be necessary for the Community and member states to have worked out, and agreed to implement, regional and structural policies that—in the words of the draft treaty —"promote . . . balanced development"; but the Prime Minister is not negotiating for that either. Real convergence of economic performance, accountability of institutions and active policies for balanced development are the essential ingredients that will be required to make a single currency practical and beneficial.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The right hon. Gentleman has just mentioned balanced economic and social development, and his amendment refers to "social cohesion". Is he aware that some EC partner states want mechanisms for cohesion to be written into the text of the treaties that may be signed after Maastricht? What is his party's attitude to that idea?

Mr. Kinnock: I understand that the Spanish have made a specific point of seeking to ensure that outcome. On the basis of recent information, I am able to distinguish between their insistence at this point and a useful negotiating ploy. The hon. Gentleman would be well advised to pay some regard to the settlement of next year's budget, and to set arguments for including specific references to social cohesion in the Maastricht treaty in the context of the bargaining that that budget will involve.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has recognised the importance of convergence. Last Thursday, he said on television:

"If that convergence is not achieved then the establishment of a (single) currency could be a tremendous dislocation and be at tremendous cost."

The right hon. Gentleman was, of course, absolutely right; but he went on to say:

"We ought to wait and see if this convergence happens".

There you have it, Mr. Speaker. From the man who told us that unemployment was a price well worth paying, we now have the strategy for the 1990s—"wait and see". The Wilkins Micawber of 11 Downing street tells us to wait and see. No other Government in the European Community are taking such a supine attitude to the need to secure convergence.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): My right hon. Friend has made a number of important points about the changes that will be necessary if European monetary union is not to do the country enormous damage. Can he assure us that he would not be prepared to support the present EMU treaty, which does not contain the provisions and safeguards that he has mentioned? Can he confirm that he does not merely wish to have a treaty that does not currently exist?

Mr. Kinnock: The unfortunate fact that my right hon. Friend must recognise is that the current treaty has been negotiated by the current Government, who do not share our sense of priorities. I can tell him that, if we had been involved in the process during the years in which this Government were involved, proper priority would have been given to the very stipulations that we laid down some time ago about convergence, the accountability of institutions and the need for a change in regional and structural funding—as well as several other considerations, some of which are now contained in article 2 of the treaty. Given my right hon. Friend's well-known views and his desire to protect the interests of the British people, I am sure that he would have found his part in the process very satisfying.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Surely the right hon. Gentleman realises what nonsense he is talking. If he had been in charge, we would have been out of the Community, because that was the basis of his election campaign.

Mr. Kinnock: If Britain follows the policies and approaches set out by the right hon. Gentleman, it will be in the second division in the Community. To illustrate that point, let me remind the right hon. Gentleman of what his right hon. Friend the Chancellor said:

"wait and see if this convergence happens."

That is not being said by any other country or Government in the Community. Other countries are not saying, "Let us wait and see if convergence happens; let us wait and see whether performance improves." They are saying, "Let us get on with building economic strength and working actively to secure convergence." That is what we in Britain must do: we must catch up, and then we must compete effectively as we have not done since the present Government came to office.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Members who are rising are on the list of those wishing to speak in the debate. It will not make it very easy for them to be called if they seek to interrupt now.

Mr. Kinnock: The great problem for our country is the fact that our Government do not follow the policies that are necessary for the building of economic strength. Economic, industrial and social policies that are regarded by Conservatives, Christian Democrats, socialist Liberals and coalition Governments in the rest of the Community as the conventional duties of government are anathema to our Conservative Government. As a result, our country is in severe recession, with falling manufacturing output, falling investment and negative growth for the second time in 10 years. It is small wonder that, of the 940,000 jobs that have been lost in the Community in the past year, 768,000 —80 per cent.—were lost here in Britain. Every day since the current Prime Minister took office, 3,000 people in Britain have lost their jobs. That is not convergence; it is divergence of the worst kind.

Not content with letting Britain's economic performance fall behind, the Government now want its social provision to fall behind as well. The 11 other Community Governments—Governments of all political persuasions —all accept the social charter and the extension of qualified majority voting to social policy. They understand that the single market must have a social dimension if it is fully to benefit the people of the Community. They face, realistically, the fact that in the single market there must be guaranteed minimum provisions of employment and social provision, so that countries with high standards are not undercut by those with low standards. Only the British Conservatives reject that rational view. Only the British Tories reject the social charter. Only this Government refuse to guarantee their people the same minimum rights as their fellow Europeans.

Eleven other Governments believe that employees are entitled to involvement in and information about the

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management of large-scale European companies. Only the British Government oppose that principle. Eleven other Governments believe that there must be general limits on daily and weekly working hours. Only the British Government oppose that principle. Eleven other Governments accept the proposals for basic rights to parental leave. Only the British Government are against that. Eleven other countries accept the extension of full-time employment rights to part-time workers. Only this Government oppose that in principle.

Not content with relegating the British economy to the second division, the British Government want the British people to have only second-class employment rights in Europe. A Government who deliberately stand in the way of basic employment rights for millions of British people cannot claim to be standing up for Britain. They cannot claim, either, to be at the heart of Europe.

By the same token, a Government who resist qualified majority voting on environmental policies fail in their duty to our country and to the Community. It is clear to everyone that management of the international environment is a Community responsibility. I hope that the Government will approach that question at Maastricht in the most positive way, given that they perpetually make claims about their commitment to the environment. They make other claims, of course——

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: I apologise for not giving way to the right hon. Gentleman. It is difficult to do so after so many interruptions, all of which have eaten into the time available. In order to keep a sense of balance, I shall have to deny the right hon. Gentleman the opportunity to intervene.

The Government claim that, whenever decisions are taken at Community level, they are the actions of bureaucratic and unaccountable members or agents of the Commission who are trying to push their way into every nook and cranny of national life. It is true that the Commission has great powers that have been ceded by Governments and Parliaments—powers that will not be reclaimed by Governments and Parliaments. All the more reason, therefore, to make changes to address the resulting democratic deficit by ensuring that the Commission is held more effectively to account by the European Parliament, which is elected by the people in every Community country. I was glad to hear what the Prime Minister said in his speech, but it has to be put to him that if it is right for a non-elected Commission to initiate legislation that affects everybody in the European Community, how can it be wrong for the elected members of the European Parliament to have the same right to initiate legislation?

In the European circumstances, which are still volatile —sometimes tragically so—the Community has inevitably and increasingly become the centre of political and economic development in the entire continent. The evolution of the Community is continuing, both with the European Free Trade Association countries and with the new democracies of eastern and central Europe. That change must be fostered. I was glad to hear the Prime Minister strongly confirm that today. Among the most important of the actions to be taken is the gradual development of associate membership and then, I hope, full membership for countries in eastern and central Europe, both to encourage economic advance and, vitally, to strengthen democracy.

The European Community now has a political identity that is in part being forged by the efforts of member states and in part by the movement of international events, especially in recent years. Some wish further to define that identity by adopting common foreign and security policies, with qualified majority voting. That, however, would produce a result which would probably be the opposite of the one that its proponents desire. It would weaken, not strengthen, the Community and its ability to act. Co-operation and consensus, therefore, remain the most useful and reliable arrangement for Community foreign and security policies.

Europe now has more democracy, more freedom and more potential for economic, social and cultural advance than ever before in its history, but we know that if that potential is to be fulfilled it cannot be left to chance. That is why we have put forward policies to promote efficiency and growth, opportunity and social justice. They are all essential components in the development of a Europe that is not only a market for its producers but a genuine community for all its people. Developing that market, building that community, is the future for Britain in Europe. It is that future that the Labour party will work for, and it is that future that the British people will vote for at the election.

4.55 pm

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher (Finchley): I should like to make it clear at the outset of my remarks that tonight I shall support the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say again—this time to those who sit on the Opposition Benches—that this debate is being watched and heard by very many people.

Mrs. Thatcher: For the sake of clarity, I repeat that I shall support the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my other right hon. Friends. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his speech and on the clear way in which he set out his views and indicated his way ahead. I know that he has difficult negotiations at Maastricht and that therefore he needs our support in those negotiations. I, for one, am——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: Not yet.

I for one am very grateful for this opportunity that has been given to right hon. and hon. Members seriously to put forward their views on what should be a very great and serious occasion. When my right hon. Friend is negotiating in Maastricht, it will undoubtedly be a very tense and hard negotiation. He has already said that there are some proposals which are quite unacceptable to the Government, and he pointed out which they were. His task will be to remove those proposals before he comes back to this House. *[Interruption.]* In my day, that would have required the occasional use of the handbag. Now it will doubtless be the cricket bat, but that is a good thing because it will be harder.

The Government will achieve their objectives only by putting our arguments vigorously and persistently, by refusing to be intimidated by deadlines and by making it clear that there are certain points on which we are not prepared to surrender. *[Interruption.]* Right hon. and hon. Members may be certain that I shall make my views clear, if I am given the opportunity to do so. It is not my custom to use coded messages

My right hon. Friends have already shown that they can negotiate hard and that they have the courage to say no to proposals that are plainly not acceptable to the House. They have already explained why some measures should not be made by amending the treaty of Rome because that would bring them under the jurisdiction of the European Court, which has different methods of construing any proposal or legislation from those used by our courts.

I was astonished by the speech of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). This is a very serious debate. There are enormously serious issues affecting the future rights of the House and its future responsibilities. When we are talking about the rights and responsibilities of the House, what we are really talking about are the rights of our constituents, and they need to be treated very seriously indeed.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Lady has referred to the rights of constituents. Will she please clarify the reasons why she is opposed to inviting the people, whose rights are to be bargained about at Maastricht, to reach the final decision? I know that she took a different view when we entered the Community, at the time of the referendum and at the time of the Single European Act, but given the enormity of what is now proposed, even with the reservations that the Prime Minister has properly expressed just before a negotiation, will she tell the House why she does not support the rights of the people to give the final verdict on such a major constitutional question?

Mrs. Thatcher: I shall have something to say about that towards the end of my speech. I shall address my remarks directly to the point that the right hon. Gentleman has made. I am very conscious that the only authority that we have is the authority given to us by the ballot box.

May I make one or two more comments on the speech of the Leader of the Opposition? I came to the same conclusion from his speech as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor—that the right hon. Member for Islwyn was going to have a single currency willy-nilly. He has already made up his mind. The argument that he uses is that, if others have it, we must. That is an argument for a flock of sheep, not for people who are sent here to analyse the problem and to use our minds and our reason to say which course we should follow. If ever it is said that whatever they do we must follow, then they will put all kinds of things on the table which we shall have to fight very much harder.

I know full well that the Labour party made a commitment to a single currency and attached certain conditions. That commitment was made before the draft proposals were published. When they were published, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, those conditions were not there. That should have made a difference to the Labour party's decision.

It is not surprising to some of us that the Labour party might wish to hand control of our financial and economic affairs to Europe, or indeed to almost anyone other than itself. It would suit it to get out of the responsibility and to pass it over to another body. That is not what we are here for. The fundamental issue—*[Interruption.]* I said that I am not accustomed to using coded messages. The fundamental issue——

Mr. Haynes: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: Not yet.

I will take the broad-brush issues, because it is very easy to get lost in the detail. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask the House to settle down? This parliamentary debate is of great importance. I ask the House to deal with it seriously. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) must contain himself.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is within your discretion to impose a 10-minute rule on speeches. Is that applicable to all hon. Members, but more applicable to hon. Members who rarely turn up at this place?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member should know that it is not within my discretion to put a 10-minute limit on speeches at this point.

Mrs. Thatcher: Thank you very much. The speech would be shorter if I could get on with it.

The fundamental issue that will confront the Government at Maastricht is that the draft treaties propose an enormous, and, to me, unacceptable, transfer of responsibility from this House, which is clearly accountable to the British people, to the European Community and its institutions, which are not. In this House we are rightly——

Mr. Haynes: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: In due course.

We are rightly jealous of our powers and responsibilities. As I said a moment ago, we are very much aware that our authority comes from the ballot box and that what we are talking about are the rights of the British people to govern themselves under their own laws, made by their own Parliament.

It has rightly been said that it is the character of a people which determines the institutions which govern them, and not the institutions which give people their character. Yes, it is about being British and it is about what we feel for our country, our Parliament, our traditions and our liberties. Because of our history, that feeling is perhaps stronger here than anywhere else in Europe, and it must determine the way in which our Government approach such fundamental matters.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said a good deal about the Single European Act, which has many lessons for us. It is not the case, as is sometimes alleged, that the Single European Act introduced qualified majority voting in the Community—it was already in the treaty of Rome. As my right hon. Friend said, the Act extended it in certain limited areas for the express and sole purpose of completing the common or single market by 1992. That was all. In the words of article 8A, these measures were adopted

"with the aim of progressively establishing the internal market over a period expiring on 31st December 1992."

[Mrs. Thatcher]

Moreover, although it was in our interests to have majority voting on some measures, it was not on others and unanimity was explicitly preserved for other important areas. As article 100A makes clear, qualified majority voting does not apply

"to fiscal provisions, to those relating to the free movement of persons nor to those relating to the rights and interests of employed persons."

We would have expected some of the Commission's directives to have been taken under that unanimity clause, which requires us all to consent.

Mr. Haynes: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: One moment—in due course.

The Commission, however, has subsequently tried to circumvent the unanimity requirements by bringing forward proposals under other articles of the treaty where qualified majority voting is the rule. It has received some support from the European Court, which made an interpretation that would not have been made by our courts.

I raise that because we should draw a clear lesson from what has happened under the Single European Act. Many of us gave assurances about the unanimity rules, fully believing that they would be honoured and that the spirit of them would be honoured. Any powers conceded to the Commission by agreement are likely to be widened in practice and extended into areas that we do not envisage. We must look at the draft proposals in that light.

The other important step in the Single European Act, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, was the agreement to strengthen and improve co-operation on foreign policy. That agreement was never made part of the treaty of Rome—and quite rightly not. There are two ways to go—the treaty of Rome, with the European Court's interpretation of it, which is quite different from ours, or an intergovernmental agreement which is binding upon us but which does not have to enter into our law and is not part of the treaty of Rome.

That agreement on political co-operation is an excellent agreement. It was wholly drafted by us in the Foreign Office—*[Laughter.]*—to whom I gladly pay tribute in connection with that agreement and hope that they will be pleased—but it was tabled after I had shown it to the Germans and the French to get their approval. It was a bit offside but, nevertheless, some would take it as a compliment.

Countries with a history and a tradition such as Britain's cannot allow their hands to be tied on defence and on foreign policy by making them or their implementation subject to majority voting. I was very grateful to the Prime Minister for what he said, because something in a speech made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—I think, in The Hague—suggested that there might be majority voting for implementation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I know that he will take it in very good part when I say that I read it, analysed it and thought that he was going a bit wobbly. However, I am delighted to hear from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that it is all to be agreed and that there will be no majority voting, that we shall continue under the intergovernmental agreements and not have things attached to the treaty of Rome.

Looking to the longer perspective, the history of our dealings with the European Community seems to consist of our conceding powers, of reassurances being given about their limits, of those limits being breached, and of the European Community then coming back with a new set of demands for more power for the Commission. That is the conveyor belt to federalism. That conveyor belt will not be stopped just by removing the word "federal" from the treaty.

I do not believe that any of my colleagues want federalism, but, judging from the right hon. Gentleman's speech, the Opposition are already committed to it. Faced with this, I believe that the majority of the British people do not want to hand over substantially more powers to the European Community. I believe that our objective must be to uphold the sovereignty of Parliament which has served us so well. That is more than can be said for the use that the Commission has made of some of its powers to promote what one newspaper has rightly described as "Euro-lunacies". I shall not waste the time of the House by listing them.

It was never the intention—

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Mrs. Thatcher: A little more patience.

It was never the intention, I believe, of the founders of the European Community that the Commission should try to exercise its control over every aspect of a nation's life in that way. Again, I was very grateful to my Foreign Secretary—*[Laughter.]* It is perfectly all right—my right hon. Friend is used to both praise and blame from me. Agreed? Excellent. Good.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend had a number of Foreign Secretaries in her time. I accept the tribute on behalf of them all.

Mrs. Thatcher: I am not quite sure whether he should.

However, that is why the Government are right to resist strongly—as my right hon. Friend said—attempts by some countries to bring education, health, social affairs, immigration and security into the treaty of Rome. We dealt with immigration under the Single European Act by a declaration which said that nothing in the Act should prevent us from making our own arrangements at borders to stop immigration, terrorism and crime. That is already agreed, and I hope that it will not be removed from the end of the Single European Act.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the social charter. I have never for one moment regretted being isolated in opposing the social charter. If I had not opposed it, it would have been assumed that we had agreed to many of the directives—there are about 40 under that charter—and there would have been implied commitment to them. There is not. It was absolutely right to oppose it. Moreover, it would have placed unnecessary burdens and restrictions on our industry, it would, of course, have caused more unemployment and it would have been an unwarranted intrusion into our national affairs.

Most dangerous of all when it comes to the transfer of powers is the draft treaty on economic and monetary union. My right hon. Friend has already said that he will reject most of the political proposals. Economic and monetary union and being in charge of one's own economic policy go to the heart of our democracy and our

powers. If one gives that up, one will have given up the capacity to make the main policies for which we are here and which affect the life of our nation.

Moreover, of course one is judged in an election on one's performance on the economy. Of course one is judged abroad on how successful we are and on how successful we were in transforming our economy from a socialist economy to an enterprise economy.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mrs. Thatcher: If the hon. Gentleman would listen for one moment.

That will be the battleground for an election. It would be pretty ironic if, when arguing about the performance on this issue on one side or the other, candidates had, in the next breath, to say, "It may be that we shall pass all these powers over to the Community and other institutions." That is an enormous battery of powers, as one has seen from the economic and monetary union.

Money Bills and the general economic policy are the exclusive responsibility of this elected House. We are not, in my view, entitled ever to give away those responsibilities or to give away the people's rights, which is what a single currency would mean. Nor do I believe that a single currency would be in this country's interests. It would require a vast transfer of resources to the poorer countries of the Community to enable them to meet the obligations of membership of a single currency—and that at a time when we in Britain are already giving more money in most years to the European Community than to the third world. *[Interruption.]* Look at the autumn statement. Many people outside——

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Mrs. Thatcher: No, I must give way to my hon. Friends on the Back Benches first.

Many people would have thought that we should give more money to the third world than to the Community. In the coming years, we shall be giving about £2·5 billion to the Community and £2·1 billion to the third world. That is before—*[Interruption.]* No wonder they do not make very good speeches—they never listen. That is before any account is taken of increased requests for structural funds because of a single currency. I think that we should take that very much into account.

Most importantly, a single currency would take away any democratic accountability for our economic policies to the people of this country. I know that some people say, "Don't worry, a single currency will never come about, because the convergence conditions will never be achieved." The convergence conditions are totally unrealistic. Indeed, I doubt if they are achievable for many countries in the Community.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: Certainly, it will be difficult—*[Laughter.]* It is dangerous to assume that, because the conditions are difficult at the moment, they will stay the same. It is quite possible that the Community will change them, while still keeping the goal of a single currency. Too often in the past, we have seen what we thought was a watertight agreement being subsequently eroded.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) has noted in correspondence in *The Times*, there is the serious question of surveillance of our economic policies by the Commission and the duty not to have an excessive deficit. From studying the section to which my right hon. Friend referred, it seems as if we shall be under surveillance anyway on a number of issues, even though we choose to use the exemption clause in the proposed treaty.

Mr. Haynes: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: For old times' sake, I will give way to the hon. Gentleman before I go on to the important point about the exemption clause.

Mr. Haynes: Just a year ago, the Conservative party committed a dastardly act against the right hon. Lady. I have missed her from the Dispatch Box ever since. If she was still in the seat of power, what would she be negotiating in Europe?

Mrs. Thatcher: I am making a pretty good fist of just that.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hopes to secure agreement to an opting-out or exemption clause, and one appears in the treaty. My concern, which is shared by many hon. Members of all parties, is how effective it would be in practice, bearing in mind the fact that, even if we exercise that power, we are still required to sign up to the goal of a single currency and to sign up to the institutions designed to prepare the way for it.

How easy would it be in practice to resist the pressures to go further? We do not want to be told that, because we have agreed to take part in the earlier stages of economic and monetary union under the proposed treaty, we have no real choice left but to accept a single currency. It seems to me as if that is the design of the whole draft proposals.

First, one has to have convergence with very different conditions. Before one can enter the single currency, one has to have another set of proposals—including, for example, that one has stayed within the narrow range of the exchange rate mechanism for two years. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) spotted the proposition. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, eight member states could go to a single currency. We are in the exchange rate mechanism.

If we wish to keep open the option of going into a single currency, we have virtually no freedom of action in that time. One cannot have different interest rates. If one's interest rates are lower, currency will flow out. If one's interest rates are higher, a good deal of money might flow in artificially. One would be linked inevitably to that single currency. The rate would be 2·5 per cent. and we should be unable to operate separately.

That is the design of the treaty. It always happens little by little. We should be told that we have come so far—from 6 per cent. to 2·5 per cent., and then from 2·5 per cent. to 2 per cent. or closer—that we have no option but to join. We must totally reject that, if need be——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Thatcher: Not at the moment. The hon. Gentleman should listen to my argument.

As the hon. Member for Govan said, in such circumstances it would probably mean coming out of the exchange rate mechanism to keep our freedom of action. That is the danger of signing up to this treaty, and I hope that my right hon. Friends will consider that carefully. My

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right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor genuinely wish to keep open the right to go for exemption, and do not wish to be put by the treaty into a kind of funnel in which one has to go automatically to a single currency.

Mr. Dicks: After her clear analysis of the situation, will my right hon. Friend explain why she took us into the exchange rate mechanism?

Mrs. Thatcher: If one enters the exchange rate mechanism, one gets co-operation with the other European Community countries, and there is no need to go any further. One has the latitude one wants. That was the advice tendered to me on several occasions. We have a 6 per cent. latitude. Other countries have had to have their currencies devalued or revalued, and they have been perfectly able to do so in the circumstances. One uses the exchange rate mechanism and the deutschmark as a kind of gold standard, but one can change the value if one finds that one needs to do so and that the alternative would be unemployment. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is satisfied.

In some ways, it would be better for those who want a single currency to be achieved to go to it by a separate agreement outside the treaty of Rome. If it is achieved through the treaty of Rome, we get all the difficulties of interpretation by the European Court. If people want a single currency, why should they not achieve it outside the treaty of Rome? We have had intergovernmental conferences outside the treaty. That would be the way to do it, and it would not get us into the difficulties that I have described, of signing up to the concept of a single currency, signing up to its institutions and being driven into what I regard as a trap.

I recall the debate on economic and monetary union on 2 November 1989, in which almost universal opposition was expressed in the House to the whole Delors concept of monetary union and a single currency. It was as recently as November 1989. I remember attending the next European Council and saying to my colleagues, "It is no good. Our Parliament just will not accept it. It goes to the heart of our parliamentary tradition". My colleagues understood that and were prepared to make provision for it.

There has been a colossal and inexplicable change, especially among Opposition Members. The Opposition seem to be prepared to give up the parliamentary supremacy that has been the heart of our constitution.

I want to reply to the point raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about a referendum. If at some point in the future there should be agreement between the parties in the House to abandon the right to issue the pound sterling—not only now, but in the future—and if the House agreed to abandon the right to issue our own currency, with all that that implies, and to adopt a single currency, the people would have no choice at an election time about that enormously important point.

If the Conservative party, the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats all said, "We are going to have a single currency, we are going to abandon the powers of the House of Commons and we are going to take away your rights," people could not make their views known through the ballot box at a general election. Whoever got into power would not then have the right to claim that they had a mandate. They would not have had a mandate because they would have deprived the people of a choice. They would have done so not on a small thing, but on a major fundamental constitutional issue which was the right of the people. The only alternative for the people would be to vote for extremist parties—something which I should regret very much. There would be extremist candidates everywhere.

My right hon. Friends must address their minds to this matter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said clearly that he believed in choice. He will provide choice. If everyone believes in the precise same arrangements on exemption from the single currency but we sign up to the concept, how could the people let their view be known? If one really wants to know the answer, one can find it in Dicey on the constitution. He came to the conclusion that, under those circumstances, the only thing to do was to hold a referendum, because that states clearly the issue and the merits and demerits. In our system, it would be no more binding than previous referendums which we have held in my time in Parliament. A referendum is advisory but it is not binding. The answer may be overwhelming. We had referendums in Scotland and Wales. Constitutional issues warrant a referendum.

Anyone who does not consider a referendum necessary must explain how the voice of the people shall be heard. Therefore, I conclude that we should let the people speak. If not, we shall deprive them of their say on rights which we are taking away not only from them but from future generations and which, once gone, cannot be restored. A referendum may not be popular with some members of my party, but I doubt whether they have thought it through.

I am grateful for the opportunity to express my views clearly. I believe passionately in this House. I have been here for 32 years, although that is not as long as some Opposition and Conservative Members. We should retain parliamentary supremacy. We should not make a massive transfer of power to the Community, which is not accountable to our electorate. Therefore, we should not join a single currency.

I understand that my right hon. Friends wish to keep open the option, but the option is inevitably open because future Parliaments may consider it. We do not have to keep it open. I understand my right hon. Friends' wish, but I want to be sure that it is genuine. *[Interruption.]* Yes, of course. So does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I wish him well at Maastricht. Judging by the performance today, he will be our Prime Minister for a long time.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Paddy Ashdown. *[Interruption.]* Will hon. Members leave the Chamber quietly?

5.33 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): May I say to the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) how nice it is to have her back in the House here among us and not to hear her words wafted to us over the airways from Memphis, Tennessee. I hope she will come back as often as she can. We love to hear her expressing her views in the House, although judging by the faces of those on her own Front Bench, I am not sure that the same applies to them.

Those of us who have argued passionately and long about Britain's place in Europe—the right hon. Lady will understand what I am saying—will, having listened to her

speech and in spite of its drawbacks, be delighted that the present Prime Minister is in his seat and that she is in another. I wish that she would not, as she did when she was Prime Minister, treat the Commission as if it were General Galtieri. That is the source of some of our problems.

For more than two years, we on these Benches have been saying that Britain's destiny in Europe is the most important issue which the House and the country will face in this Parliament. For two years and more, we have said that the confusion and division that has characterised the positions of both the Labour and Conservative parties would damage them and undermine Britain's best interests in Europe. For two years, we have said that sooner or later the Labour and Tory parties will have to come, however slowly, painfully and hesitantly onto the ground on which my party has always stood on Europe.

The speeches that we heard today from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition comprehensively vindicate that judgment. However late, opportunistic, hesitant and reactive, the late conversion of the two right hon. Gentlemen is thoroughly welcome. My only regret is that, by leaving things so late and entering the negotiations so reluctantly, both parties have done mortal damage to Britain's interests. We shall pay a heavy price for that in the years to come.

But I give credit where it is due. I congratulate the Prime Minister. He has moved a long way since the summer of this year, when I asked him to accept or reject the principle of a single currency. He has come to accept it, even though he would not do so then. I make this prediction to him. He knows, we know and most Conservative Members know that, although he has come a long way, he has to move a long way yet. The stone has started rolling down the hill. There will be alarms and excursions and dramas up to the last moment in Maastricht, but, whatever the Prime Minister says, we all know that he will sign up at Maastricht. For he knows that there is no alternative, to coin a famous phrase.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way in a moment.

If the question is yes or no on Europe, no is not an answer. The Prime Minister knows that, and I believe that he understands it. He knows that it is no answer to isolate Britain in Europe. Indeed, he admitted as much in his speech, when he explained why he could not reject a single currency. He said that, if the others went ahead, we could not be outside. That is correct. The Prime Minister knows that and I suspect that his tiny rump of European separatists knows it too, whatever they might say to the contrary. However vociferous separatist Members are, the question to which they have no answer is, "What future would Britain have if we rejected European integration in favour of isolation on the periphery of the continent which is geographically and historically our home?"

I give way to the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). Ah, perhaps I have answered his question. Or did he intend to tempt me to provide the answer to the question that I posed?

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To avoid any confusion that might arise from the right hon. Gentleman's amendment, will he make it abundantly clear whether his party agrees with the principle of a referendum on the treaty? It is important that we should know. I want the right hon. Gentleman to answer yes or no, not to give a long answer.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman will discover that I shall give an unequivocal answer to that question in my speech.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Why?

Mr. Ashdown: I will tell the hon. Gentleman why. I intend to answer the question in my own time, not his.

I also congratulate the Labour party. As we heard today, it too has come a long way. I am not sure that it understands where it has arrived, but it has certainly come a long way. For Labour, it is a well-worn path. It has been here before. Labour has changed its mind on Europe twice in every decade since the 1960s—not so much the road to Damascus as another circumnavigation of the M25.

For the Labour party, on Europe, it is better to travel hopefully, even around in circles—or at least it is safer —than it is to arrive. So it will keep on travelling. No doubt it will do another circumnavigation when things turn round.

These conversions are welcome, as far as they go, but why is it that, yet again, Britain has been condemned, through lack of leadership, to be the laggard in Europe, instead of being among the leaders? Why is it that, once again, we have to be dragged along by others in Europe, unwillingly, uncertainly and at considerable cost to our influence?

My party's commitment to Europe has been consistent and clear. Our vision remains what it has been for four decades—of a Britain in the main stream of Europe, rather than seeking the illusory safety of a non-existent backwater. It is of a Britain which helps to share Europe's institutions instead of submitting to institutions shaped by others; a Britain which joins the leaders in creating an integrated Europe, rather than one which resists change until we have it forced upon us.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid Kent): If we are to recognise the right hon. Gentleman's description of Britain as the "laggard in Europe" perhaps he could explain how it is that, of all the signatories of directives in the European Community, we are the best at implementing them. If that is so, does he not think that there is some justice in our being cautious about accepting proposals for further progress from people who have not yet implemented what they have already signed up to?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman makes precisely the arguments that I make. We have obeyed the laws—we have had little hand in shaping them. That is the whole point. We have been forced to those conclusions without having the ability to shape the institutions.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Rubbish.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman says it is rubbish, but is that not exactly what the Prime Minister said at the beginning of his speech? We did not shape the common agricultural policy, about which Conservative Members now complain. The fact is that we have to submit to it. We did not shape the treaty of Rome—we had to join it at the end of the day. I am seeking to avoid that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Johnny come lately."] I heard that comment from the Conservative Benches. This party has stood on this ground——[HON. MEMBERS: "which party?"] The

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party that I represent and lead has represented that position for 40 years, and we continue to do so. One does not look to the Conservative Benches or to the Labour Benches for a clear and consistent policy on Europe, but to this party.

Mr. Cash: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No, I have given way sufficiently at this stage. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I do not wish to take up too much of the House's time. If he wishes to intervene later, I should be happy to consider giving way.

While Labour and the Tories, separately, find themselves in a minority of one in Europe, my party, whatever its position in the House, is in the majority and the main stream among European countries—a majority that spreads across all the parties.

We have no difficulty with monetary union. It is, after all, the logical and natural extension of the single market, into which the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) took this country.

The important thing is that we do not underestimate the difficulties of monetary union. The right hon. Member for Finchley was right to point them out. We do not underestimate the difficulties that they will bring our country. We know that Britain will either have a difficult period of convergence before monetary union, or a painful period of adjustment after it, because monetary union will force this country to face up to the economic decisions that we have dodged for 40 years.

Our commitment to monetary union is not made because we think that it will be a soft option or that it will be easy; it is made because the alternative—economic isolation—is even more painful for this country.

We have no difficulty either with the idea of a European central bank. How else could one run an effective, responsible and firmly anti-inflationary monetary policy for Europe? Indeed, those who argue against an independent bank are making it clear that, for them, the defeat of inflation does not come first. That, not surprisingly, is the Labour party's view. The conditions that Labour sets on that issue, as on so many others, make it clear that, whatever its criticism of the Government's negotiating stance, it could not sign up to any agreement on monetary union that is likely to emerge from Maastricht. Its own conditions would preclude it.

Labour says that it would reject monetary union, unless it meets the conditions set out in Labour's document of 30 October. But the conditions that it set out would be rightly rejected by almost every other European Community country. So Labour's policy also points towards isolation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that, without either total economic convergence—or near-total—or a massive machinery of redistribution, economic and monetary union must be as ruinous for this country as it proved to be for East Germany?

Mr. Ashdown: I know that the Labour party is in favour of it, but I have already said that I do not believe that monetary union will be a soft option. The reason for going into it is because the alternative—presumably preferred by the hon. Gentleman—which is economic isolation, would be infinitely more damaging, and over a much longer period. But if we are to have monetary union, we must have a degree of political union, too.

I simply do not understand the Government's position. In one breath they complain, with some justification, about the interfering nature of the Brussels bureaucracy, but in the very next, they vote against increasing the powers of our democratic representatives in the European Parliament, to hold the bureaucracy to account.

The Government seem to believe—indeed, the Prime Minister said—that the right thing to do is to keep things as much as possible as they are, with the Council of Ministers controlling legislation. But if the Council of Ministers is so good at controlling the Brussels bureaucracy, how come there is so much to complain about?

The fact is that increasing the powers of scrutiny and of initiation of the European Parliament is the way that we bring Brussels—and the Council of Ministers—under effective democratic control, and if the Government stand against this then they are standing for the same status quo that annoys them now so much. They cannot have it both ways, and they had better make up their minds which of the two options they want. They must either keep things as they are and stop complaining or they must give our democratic representatives in Europe the power to hold them to account and to stop the interference from Brussels of which we now legitimately complain.

Finally, Maastricht will set the terms—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the referendum?"] I promise hon. Members that I am coming to the referendum.

Maastricht will set the terms within which Europe will begin to establish a common foreign and defence policy, and rightly so. As European integration evolves, Europe's voice in world affairs will grow, and the need for Europe to speak with a single and powerful voice will grow too. We see the need for that so clearly in Yugoslavia. What we see in Yugoslavia today may well be the first example of the threats that will affect Europe's peace and stability. Threats to Europe's stability in the next few years will probably come, not from national conflicts about borders, but from older religious, ethnic and cultural conflicts which cross borders. As Yugoslavia has shown, it may well be that we have to call the power of the new Europe into being to cope with some of the problems of the old. [HON. MEMBERS: "We have failed in Yugoslavia."] Hon. Members sitting behind me say that we have failed in Yugoslavia, and so we have. Perhaps history will say that the Yugoslav problem came before Europe was ready—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to see some nods of approval for that thought on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Adley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way in a moment.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: If the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall let him speak in a moment.

However, we had better be ready soon. Yugoslavia could be but a dress rehearsal for the problems that Europe will face if, as seems increasingly likely, the Soviet Union descends into economic chaos and disintegration. Then, a strong Europe, speaking with a common voice and

able to exert its influence in the region, would be a rock of stability at the edge of a sea of confusion and potential chaos.

Mr. Adley: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that those who say that the disintegration of Yugoslavia is an example that we should fear could not be more wrong? Surely history shows that Yugoslavia was created without any democratic institutions and without the involvement of any national Parliaments, whereas the coming together of European countries is with the consent of the Parliaments of those countries.

Mr. Ashdown: With the consent of the people, too, as I shall argue in a moment. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tebbit: When the right hon. Gentleman considers the difficulty of finding a common view in this House on what our policy towards Yugoslavia should be—I might ask whether the right hon. Gentleman thinks that European policy should be to keep Yugoslavia together, as the Serbs want, or to let it break up, as the Croats and others want—he may become more keenly aware of the unlikelihood of the 12 nations agreeing on a single policy towards Yugoslavia and then enforcing it, which would require military means.

Mr. Ashdown: Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that, so far as I can tell, we have already gone a long way down that track by formulating much of a common foreign policy. If he considers how the matter has developed since the Gulf, he will see that much progress has already been made. If he asks me whether I think that it is conceivable that we could reach the kind of position about which he is talking in four or five years, my unequivocal answer is that I believe we will.

I want to make it absolutely clear, so that people understand, that this party has no interest in taking any action that will undermine NATO. Nor do we wish to see the United States leave Europe. Indeed, continuing US and Canadian involvement on the mainland of Europe is an important condition for stability in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, wise Europeans will want to begin to plan for the contingency that the US may one day leave Europe, not because we want that, but because it decides to. That eventuality could well arise within this decade. Therefore, an integrated European pillar within NATO makes good sense for today and provides a sensible preparation for what may happen tomorrow.

It is for that reason that the new Europe must embrace the new European democracies. There is no conflict, as some, including the right hon. Member for Finchley, have suggested, between deepening and widening Europe. The Government may not understand that, but the emerging eastern European democracies do, as the President of Hungary confirmed to me only yesterday. The Europe that they want to join is absolutely not the loose grouping of trading states beloved of European separatists; it is the integrated Europe that Maastricht is all about.

We in this party have no difficulty in agreeing to the main proposals that are on the table at Maastricht. I do not say that we do not have our points to make about the shape of the Europe that Maastricht is all about, but Britain will make those points effectively only if we are leading the debate in Europe about Europe's future. Ministers seem to spend their time fighting lonely battles about issues that have either already been lost or are meaningless, rather than joining others to win battles about the things that really matter. There is no clearer example of that than the Government's ludicrous battle over the word "federal".

As the rest of Europe knows only too well, the whole case for Britain's opposition to federalism is based on the British Government's deliberate and obstinate misunderstanding of the meaning of the word. Was there ever a more ridiculous argument, since our mediaeval forebears disputed how many angels could sit upon the point of a needle? The rest of Europe knows and understands that "federal" means—not concentrating power, but spreading power. The Prime Minister can look it up in the dictionary of his choice and discover that that is the true meaning of the word.

Meanwhile, we have all been subjected to the ludicrous spectacle of the Government demanding decentralisation in Brussels, while emasculating local government in Britain and dismissing out of hand any notion of a Parliament for Scotland and Wales.

The real debate that we should be having in Britain is not about yes or no, because no is not an answer. The real debate should be about how we create a citizens' Europe, not a bureaucrats' Europe; how we can give each European citizen equal political rights by ending Britain's scandalous electoral system for the European Parliament and giving the British voter the same fair access and fair votes as are enjoyed by every one of our European partners; how we limit the Community's power to interfere inappropriately in our daily lives; what the residual powers are of national, regional and local government within a system of European political integration; and, above all, about how we resist the natural tendency of Brussels and, indeed, any bureaucracy to standardise, and create a Europe in which the national, regional and cultural diversity of our countries, which is our continent's greatest strength, is preserved. Unhappily, that is the debate that neither Britain, nor Parliament, has yet been allowed to have.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I am not giving way at this stage in my speech.

The two other parties have both been more concerned about covering up their internal divisions than about deciding Britain's external future. Naturally, that has led to some wonderful contortions. Over the weekend I heard the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), who is not in his place now, on the Walden programme. He set out his tough conditions for supporting the Government. There he was, saying how much he wanted to uphold this country's proud tradition of parliamentary democracy and how he would not be pushed around. In the very next breath he said that whatever the Government agreed at Maastricht, he would be bound to support them. So much for the courage of the convictions of the Euro-separatists. If they were convinced of their arguments, they would vote against the Government's motion tomorrow night. If the Prime Minister was convinced of his, he would tell them how little it mattered to him whether they did so or not.

Then there is the wonderful spectacle revealed on today's Order Paper. Those who have told us that

[Mr. Ashdown]

Parliament is sovereign and that Europe will destroy that sovereignty have suddenly discovered that Parliament is not so sovereign that it cannot be overridden by a referendum.

We in this party do not believe in the absolute sovereignty of this or any other Parliament; we believe in the absolute sovereignty of the people. We accept the historic nature and importance of what is happening at Maastricht. In that, the right hon. Lady is absolutely right. It will alter the British constitution and change the way in which we govern ourselves. We believe that the British people should not go into Europe blindfold, as we are now in danger of doing, but with their eyes open, having seen the issues and having been able to debate them. We believe that they have a right to be involved in this decision, not separated from it.

If this Parliament remains as unrepresentative of the views of Britain as it is and if it continues to be subject to a conspiracy between the two major parties to keep the real issues of Europe off the agenda, it would be appropriate to give the people a say in this decision after Parliament has spoken. I give Parliament this warning—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Oh, yes. If the opinion polls are to be believed, a dangerous gap is opening up between how Parliament will vote tomorrow and the views of the British people. That gap will have to be bridged. I can see no way of bridging it other than by a referendum and a broad discussion of these issues.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: No, I am not giving way. The hon. Gentleman will have to forgive me.

I do not fear the people's judgment on that matter. I believe that when they know the issues and hear the arguments they will see, as so many Members of this House do not, that Britain's future lies in an integrated Europe.

We shall vote against the Government motion. The Government have no clear vision for Europe. They simply want to bob along like a cork on the water, pushed this way and that by whatever is the prevailing tide of the moment. They have failed to show the kind of leadership that the country desperately needs on this historic issue. Their first aim has been the appeasement of their tiny separatist wing, rather than the long-term interest of the nation.

At this crucial moment Britain needs a Government who are clear, decisive and united on Europe. Instead, I fear, it has a Government who are confused, muddled and divided. Thank goodness a general election is not far away.

6.1 pm

Sir Geoffrey Howe (Surrey, East): I begin by joining my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in lending my full support to the Prime Minister in everything that he said, and in giving my full support to the motion—although I fear that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and I may not be able to agree on other matters, with which I shall deal later.

The Prime Minister's speech was as comprehensive as it was meticulous, and well reflected the balance of the motion. It deserves the wholehearted support of the entire House. The only thing that makes me doubt that is that the general proposition underlying it appears to have received some incoherent support from the Leader of the Opposition. If anything could have frightened us away from the proposition it would have been the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to advance a sensible argument on anything at all. I cannot imagine what comfort that gives the right hon. Gentleman's party.

Underlying the debate, a number of ancient fallacies have begun to re-emerge in this country and elsewhere. One that keeps recurring is that the Community to which we still belong remains an economic community, devoted only to economic objectives. That was never its purpose. It was one of the great post-war institutions whose central purpose was political—to put an end to the frightful nationalistic quarrels which had for decades, indeed centuries, seen the people of Europe tearing each other to pieces and spreading havoc far and wide.

The Community has gone a long way towards achieving that central purpose; towards taming nationalism without suppressing patriotism; towards sharing sovereignty without destroying nations; and towards putting the magic of markets to work for society in a stable democratic setting. In that way it has used economic means to promote the central political objective of

"ever closer union among the people of Europe".

That was at the heart of the process at the outset, and it remains so.

The next fallacy that causes some confusion in the discussion is the persistence of what I regard as a narrow outdated approach to the notion of sovereignty. Such an approach was repudiated by Harold Macmillan, the then Prime Minister, when we applied to join the Community, as it had been by Winston Churchill before that. That idea is that sovereignty is something to be guarded, preserved and held in splendid isolation, the idea that we must always think of sovereignty as something that we are required to hand over, required to lose, to surrender or to sacrifice—conceding, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, powers demanded by the Community.

That strikes me as an unduly negative approach. Sovereignty is not an undivided thing. If it were, the only ruler who was absolutely sovereign and monarch of all he surveyed was Robinson Crusoe. But he was sovereign of everything and master of nothing.

There is a great confusion involved in regarding sovereignty as in some way akin to virginity—"Now you have it, now you don't." It is not a zero sum game, or some kind of single-entry book-keeping exercise, related to "graph-paper economics". Sovereignty is an asset to be used, deployed, exploited, committed and joined in partnership with that of others.

I make no apology for reminding the House of the quotation from Sir Winston Churchill upon which I drew last year:

> "It is said with truth that this involves some sacrifice or merger of national sovereignty. But it is also possible and not less agreeable to regard it as the gradual assumption by all the nations concerned of that larger sovereignty which can alone protect their diverse and distinctive customs and characteristics and their national traditions."

That is a more positive and valuable view of sovereignty.

The historic deepening process of the Community was foreseen from the outset, which is why those who commended it to the country 20 or 30 years ago took care

to see that it was not misunderstood. Harold Macmillan, at the time of the 1962 party conference at Llandudno, when he applied to join the Community, described it as "perhaps the most fateful and forward-looking policy decision in our peacetime history."
And so it remained.

"Ever closer union" is an objective which has been reaffirmed and defined time after time in successive meetings of the European Council. I remember that at the first European Council which my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and I attended together, in Stuttgart, it was reaffirmed as a clear objective. The Single European Act in 1985 reaffirmed the need to make concrete progress towards European unity in accordance with the Stuttgart declaration.

There has always been a temptation to regard the successive recommitments to the central political purpose of the Community as being confined to the small print, to be accepted only through gritted teeth and only on our terms. But it was never thus. It was always part of the process whose importance was made clear at the outset. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) echoed Harold Macmillan's theme when he spoke to the House on 28 October 1971:

"I cannot over-emphasise . . . the importance . . . the scale and quality of the decision . . . whether we are going to decide that Western Europe should now move along the path to real unity . . . our decision tonight will vitally affect . . . the sort of world in which we British people and many generations to come will live their lives".—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 2202-3.]

It was more than an event; it was the start of a process.

It is a fallacy to regard that process as some kind of negative slippery slope along which each reluctant step should be seen as more sinful than the last. That negative, apprehensive, fearful, even sometimes hostile tone with which some Euro-sceptics approach and discuss the question is wholly contrary to the best interests of Britain. Those who most confidently claim to speak for British interests sometimes seem to have the least confidence that those interests are likely to prevail. All too often they see the European enterprise as one huge thicket of hostility and conspiracy. They far too seldom see it as a field in which British talents and interests can prevail and multiply. We need to see the process as a series of opportunities to be exploited and carried forward in good faith.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Sir R. Rhodes James), in his biography of Robert Boothby, quotes something that Churchill said to Boothby:

"We are not making a machine, we are growing a living plant."

That is the reality. It is our task, now as ever, to nurture the growth of that plant in the right way.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt so firmly with one of the most gravely misleading illusions of the Euro-sceptics—that Britain can exercise a veto that will stop the process in its tracks. I was dismayed that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the Confederation of British Industry a couple of weeks ago:

"This train cannot leave the station unless we are on board".

That is not the position. A veto exercised at Maastricht will not bring the intergovernmental conferences to an end. They remain in place and will continue until member states reach common accord. So the issues could and would return—in Lisbon next June, and in Edinburgh the following December. If that were the course of events, I must tell my hon. Friends that a pointless attempt to veto Maastricht would make it much more likely that those IGCs would resume under the guidance of the Labour party, heaven forbid.

An even more serious delusion is to believe that our veto could bring the whole process to a halt. That overestimates the leverage of this country, and underestimates the weight and momentum of the others in support of the agenda. It is a further error to believe—the Prime Minister made this clear—that, if the veto were deployed, others could thereby be prevented from going ahead on their own. As my right hon. Friend said, there is nothing in Community law to prevent a smaller group of countries from pressing ahead with a separate treaty, outside the existing Community structure, to pursue policies that go further and faster.

That does not mean that we are without support for our arguments in the negotiations. So long as we take part in good faith, with respect for the common objectives, we may take part with the utmost vigour. If our arguments are good, we shall find supporters and allies. However, if we seek partners for a suicide pact in those negotiations, we will look in vain.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is it not right that such actions can be taken by our European partners only outside the treaty? It is totally illegal for them to take such action within the treaty.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is precisely my point. I am glad that my hon. and learned Friend has grasped it so clearly. There is nothing to stop a smaller group of nations, such as 11 out of the Twelve, going ahead with objectives that would leave us to one side and deprive us of the ability to contribute.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): So what?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall address that point later. I assure the House that if we were to stand aside in that way it would not stop our partners going ahead and it would ensure that we were left behind, quite possibly under a Labour Government.

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall not give way.

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not give way, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) must resume their seats.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall try to make my speech while finding opportunities, from time to time, to give way. I am beset on several sides, and I recognise the popularity of the case.

The emergence of the single currency as a lively issue in this debate is also unexpected in some ways, because, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley said:

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

"Progressive realisation of economic and monetary union was agreed by the Community in 1972 and therefore was accepted by us when we acceded to the Community in 1973."
—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 856.]
That view was endorsed many times at subsequent summits.

Does that or does that not mean a single currency? It should not take people by surprise if it means a single currency. It is a legitimate, understandable objective. One of the reasons that the Community came into existence was to create an economic unit in Europe capable of competing on the scale of the United States, where a single currency can be traded from Connecticut to California.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It has the same language.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes. The United States has two advantages, which is all the more reason for looking seriously at the possibility of a single currency for the European Community.

Undoubtedly there would be a real advantage in achieving a single currency. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that that should be seen as the great prize. I accept, however, that a price would have to be paid for that prize. It is a prize because, without it, we are now spending 20 billion ecu per year on exchange costs between different countries. It would be advantageous not just to business men but to ordinary citizens if we could think in terms of one currency throughout our great continental mass.

A single currency is also regarded as something that is feasible, because the draft treaty on economic and monetary union is already close to agreement on the necessary arrangements. However, they must be on the right terms, as described by the Prime Minister. Effective convergence by the participants is crucial. A strong ecu is crucial. Accountability not just to the Bundesbank but to all member states is also crucial, but through and to an independent monetary institution. All those things can be achieved within the framework of the present proposed treaty. They do not impact on our right to retain independent control of our fiscal policy, expenditure and taxation. I believe that a strong, positive case can be made for a single currency. I would be prepared to support it on the right terms and conditions.

Mr. Dalyell: As a distinguished lawyer with considerable experience of European negotiations, who does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think is correct in the crucial argument about attribution and the whole question of additionality, which affects many of us? Is it the Prime Minister, who argues that Commissioner Bruce Millan is completely wrong or is it—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Is this relevant?"] It is relevant to many of our constituents—or is it the Commission, with its legal advice, which says that Britain will not receive many millions of pounds for the science budget or RECHAR? Who does the right hon. and learned Gentleman believe is right?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman flatters me by inviting me to offer a legal opinion. He seems to have confused me with the character who, 20 years ago, was one of the Law Officers to the Crown. It is not my function to answer such a question. The hon. Gentleman must find a more suitable target.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that I must be allowed to get on, in view of the nature of the previous intervention.

The Prime Minister is not arguing the case for the acceptance of the single currency now. However, it is entirely right to provide for the opt-in clause of the kind that is found in the present treaty. It is of the utmost importance to have such a clause, because it changes the automatic quality of the proposals originally put forward by Mr. Delors and the Delors committee. It provides for that kind of option. It was the Delors proposal that was at the heart of the debate in this House two years ago.

An even stronger case can be made for the single currency. What if all the others are able to agree within the framework of the treaty so nearly agreed by my right hon. Friend? What if they are able to put together a single currency? How then stands the case for us to stay out? I should tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley that this has nothing to do with flocks of sheep, dead or alive. It depends upon the heart of the argument, the practical argument about the interests of this country.

If the single currency goes ahead, it is likely to extend not just to present Community members, but, as the Community maintains its open door to the east, will apply to the European Free Trade Association countries and many if not all of the COMECON countries, and may become the key currency for many other countries, probably starting with the republics of the Soviet Union.

If such a thing happened just across the water from Britain, the ecu would become world currency and it would challenge the over-borrowed dollar and the yen for leadership of world markets. The European monetary system as such would disappear. If the pound sterling stood alone outside the single currency, it would be uniquely exposed. We would have to pay high transaction costs for exchanging currency, we would have high volatility in our exchange rates and high interest rates, and face a threat to inward investment that would also threaten the City of London. It is ironic that even the Swiss are now reluctant to face the prospect of exclusion.

We must ask ourselves whether we shall truly benefit our trade, our investment and the prosperity of our people if we defect from the club at the very point when almost the whole continent is thrusting to join it. I am grateful that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) is ready for the Government to sign up to the EMU text under suitable conditions. I certainly agree with that, although my right hon. Friend and I may not agree on other matters.

We must remain at the heart of the debate, not just for economic reasons but because of the Community's growing political importance. As far back as 1962, Harold Macmillan said clearly that if we stayed out of the Community:

"We would find the US and the Community concerting policy together on major issues, with much less incentive than now to secure our agreement or even consult our opinion. To lose influence both in Europe and Washington, as this must mean, would seriously undermine our international position."
If that was true then, how much more true must it be today?

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, not for the moment.

We have seen, even from this debate, that we have now reached the point where scarcely any of the sceptics even argue that we should leave. They all accept that we should remain in the Community and, in those circumstances, we should do so in a way that enables us to take the fullest advantage of it.

We must face the real issues. They are totally concealed by over-simplified talk of the threat of a federal European super-state—yes or no? There is a huge range of theoretical and practical possibilities between the wholly independent —"sovereign" if one wishes—nation state and the wholly integrated federation of the United States or the Federal Republic of Germany. There are many different staging points on that spectrum. The question now is whether and, if so, where and how far we need to adjust the present position.

The real issues of importance are the quality and scope of the quasi-federal structure that already exists. The House must be grateful to the Prime Minister for the measured and comprehensive analysis that he has offered on all the issues that arise.

The biggest existing shortcoming in the present Community is in relation to the need for more solid barriers to the enlargement of Community competence. On that subject, I agree with the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, and the present Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said that it was necessary to codify and ring-fence that part of the structure. It is right to resist ill-defined extensions of Community competence in social matters. It is right to resist extending Community competence that would threaten winning in the wrong way the "battle of Downing street", which we have won "in place of strife" on behalf of the Labour party—by reversing all our industrial legislation.

The Prime Minister was right to assert the importance of subsidiarity, and the terms and the drafting of article 3B of the treaty are crucial. Equally, it is not unreasonable, when discussing the democratic deficit, to recognise that there is a case for a modest enhancement of the European Parliament's role—to introduce an additional element of democracy, without subtracting from the role of this House but by complementing it.

It is certainly not unreasonable to accept some development of the role of the Community in security and foreign policy. That would be a logical extension of the proposals put forward, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley reminded us, in 1985 by the United Kingdom for political co-operation, provided that we retain—the Prime Minister was clear about the definitional needs—the need for unanimity on the key provisions of whatever structure is designed.

Likewise, on defence, the fundamental role of NATO must be preserved, but the central and developing role of the Western European Union as the European pillar for that part of our defence needs also to be developed.

Finally, it is sensible to develop the concept of a common citizenship in the Community. Some people are opposed even to that, in a narrow and unattractive way which I do not much like. A Community citizenship would be the most practical fulfilment of a dream enunciated by Sir Winston Churchill. It shows us how we should approach the matter. He said:

"We hope to see a Europe where men"—

and women, he might have added—

"of every country will think as much of being a European as of belonging to their native land, and wherever they go in this wide domain will truly feel 'Here I am at home'."

Does not that set the right, far-ranging tone for this debate? Certainly the Prime Minister's speech did so clearly and impressively. It contrasted sharply with the narrow, over-simplified terms in which the debate is all too often conducted. Too often it is conducted in terms of unbridgeable opposites, false antitheses and exaggerated choices. I emphasise that it is not a choice between a mythical independent sovereign state and a mythical federal super-state, nor a choice between one market and one country.

All too often, the sceptics, in language of beguiling simplicity, succeed in concealing the strictly practical middle way which alone can offer Britain a real future in Europe. That is the way to achieve and sustain a realistic prospect of influence and prosperity in the new Europe as it exists on our doorsteps, rather than as the sceptics still pretend it to be.

If we were to be led astray by the bogus dilemmas and narrow perspectives that have sometimes set the parameters of Britain's European debate in recent years, the achievements of the past 12 years would be set at zero. To avoid that calamity, we must ensure that the other European states do not move ahead without us—not now, not ever. We must remain determined—as I am sure the Prime Minister is—to lead from the inside, firmly committed to our European destiny, which we shall help to shape.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is so clearly determined to follow that path. It is well in line with the instincts of his predecessors. In the 1950s, Churchill set the ideals. In the 1960s, Macmillan took the initiative. In the 1970s, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup carried it through. In the 1980s, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley achieved fundamental and far-reaching reforms. It is clear from the prospectus offered by the Prime Minister today that he is determined and well qualified to have a clearly directed and formidable impact on the Community in the 1990s.

My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary deserve the fullest possible support from the whole House, and I wish them well.

6.27 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I shall not follow the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) very far, except to suggest that if he used the word "self-government" instead of the word "sovereignty", he might understand why that cannot be shared but can only be enjoyed along with others.

The heart of the debate is the nature of the treaties before us. This is a moment of great importance and great choice for the British people. As I have listened to the contributions that have been made, I have noticed that there is a fundamental divide between those who have sufficient self-confidence in their own people and the ability of our nation to survive and prosper as a free democracy, and those who have abandoned and despaired of that prospect and are looking for a new way in which they will be absorbed within a vast European federation. I think I know where I stand on that issue, and I hope that every other hon. Member also knows where they stand.

[Mr. Peter Shore]

I said that this is a moment of choice, and I wish to illustrate how strong is the commitment in the treaties that we are discussing to a federal union. I know that there are nuances of federalism, but article A of the treaty states: "by this Treaty the High Contracting Parties established amongst themselves a Union . . .this Treaty marks a new stage in a process leading gradually to a Union with a Federal goal".

That is the opening article of the treaty. One of the concluding articles—article W.2—says:

"A conference of representatives of the Governments of the Member States shall be convened in 1996 in the perspective of strengthening the Federal character of the Union".

The 200 or 300 pages of the treaties on economic, monetary and political union not only put to us all the propositions, but we are promised a further assault on what is left of our national independence in a new treaty and a new IGC, with the perspective of strengthening the federal character of the union. Those are clear words.

One of the great mistakes that we have made in the past, as the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) acknowledged, is that we do not always read the treaties closely enough. Unfortunately, the Single European Act was ambiguous and defective in several places. That is why the Commission has been able to construct all sorts of additional powers. It did so by interpreting, with the help of the Court, some parts of that treaty. The preamble to the treaty expressed in general terms the old rhetoric of Europe and of "ever closer union", which gave considerable force and drive to the new proposals that we are discussing.

I fear that we must watch with the utmost care the words actually used. I was pleased to hear the Foreign Secretary say yesterday before the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Prime Minister repeat again today, that they will not have the commitment to a federal Europe. I understand that to mean that they will not sign a treaty which contains, in articles W and A, a commitment to a federal Europe. That is an important step, which we should all welcome.

The right hon. Member for Finchley was right to say that we have to consider not only the words but the content of the treaties, which present us with a greater difficulty. There are three great sectors of our national life which are being affected by the economic, monetary and political union treaties, and with which we are all familiar. The first is progress towards economic union, monetary union, a single currency and a central bank—which is pretty major in itself. Secondly, the treaties seek to embrace the whole of foreign and security policy within a process that will be determined by majority voting—whether or not that will be within or outside the old treaties is yet to be determined. Thirdly, they seek to extend the control of European institutions over immigration and asylum issues in this country.

If one considers any federal Government in any other part of the world, one knows perfectly well where the key powers are located. For example, in the United States they are located with the federal Government in Washington. That Government inevitably have control over the currency, with one federal bank; they are uniquely entitled to conduct foreign relations, defence and security business, and they decide who has the right to come and live in the United States and who does not.

Those are three crucial components of national sovereignty and independence. The treaties aim—we hope that they will not succeed—to transfer those powers from the keeping of the British Parliament and people to the grievously undemocratic authorities in the European Community.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it is important to scour the treaties; every hon. Member should read them. It is not good enough merely to look through the treaties to see whether they contain the words, "This is a federal treaty." We must consider what is contained in the treaties. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, when we read the treaty on political union, it is clear that it aims for a federal union? Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterand have said that, and all our 11 partners believe it to be so.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. So many of our continental colleagues do not bother to disguise the fact. Almost exactly a year ago today, Mr. Andreotti made it absolutely plain in a speech to the European Assembly that, for the first time, there were federal proposals for monetary union and for a single currency to be transferred to the European authorities. Other European statesmen said the same thing. In order that we might not forget him and his great concerns, Mr. Delors reminded us in his address to the Assembly this morning that he wanted the treaties to have a character of a still more federal nature.

Mr. Budgen: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a further danger lies in the fact that the European Court is an openly political organisation in that it does not construe European law in a narrow way, as our judges do, but does so in the light of general policy objectives? As those objectives move, ratchet-like, towards a federal structure, the decisions of the European Court will inevitably be antipathetic to those of us who wish to perserve the rights of national parliaments.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right on the issue of where the rights of the federal part of the European constitution impinge on those of the nation state. If the court is the ultimate arbiter of where the line is to be drawn, it has a most important and dangerous political character.

The three sectors in which the treaties seek to establish the competence of the European authorities are crucial to national sovereignty and national independence. I should like to think that foreign policy was as securely rescued from the grip of the European Community as the Prime Minister led us to believe this afternoon. However, the text contains some strong words. Article A.4 states:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. . .The Council shall ensure that these principles are complied with".

It continues to define in an interesting way what it calls "joint actions". It contains a declaration by the member states on the sectors in which joint action is to be taken as soon as the treaty comes into force. There is a list of sectors, including involvement in peacekeeping operations in the United Nations context, relations with the USSR and transatlantic relations.

Article C states:

"Whenever the Council decides on the principle of joint action it shall lay down the Union's general and specific

objectives . . . the Council shall stipulate as a general rule that the detailed arrangements for carrying out joint action shall be adopted by a qualified majority".

Much will depend on the line and division drawn between the collective process of launching an initiative and the implementation that will be undertaken through joint action.

The division is not clear, and I fear that there will be a dangerous overlap of one process into the other. I fear that joint action will lead to many majority decisions being taken on foreign policy issues, which I do not believe that the House would consider it right to cede to the European community. I am glad that both Front-Bench teams show considerable accord that that is not in our interests and should not be pursued.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is it such a terrible thing for us to have a common European foreign policy as, for most of the past 45 years, our foreign policy has been in the grip of the United States, which I found regrettable? It cannot get any worse, can it?

Mr. Shore: Yes, it can, and I may have to disagree with my hon. Friend about that. I may also have to disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I have no doubt that a common European foreign policy would have led to total inaction in Europe on the Gulf war, which would have been wrong. I am glad that we did not have a common policy then. That illustrates the sorts of problems which will arise.

I believe that, even when people disagree about what should be done, they should retain the freedom of action to do what they believe is right. If it was the wish of the British Government not to intervene, it should have had the right not to intervene, not because of a majority vote in Europe, but because it made that decision for itself.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I shall not, at least for a little while.

Another issue of major importance to the Government, but particularly to the Opposition, is the impact on economic powers and economic self-government of the measures proposed to take us into economic and monetary union. After all, many crucial powers of economic regulation have been abandoned in the interests of joining the European Community, such as control over trade, control over capital movements and control over many other things. I am not happy about all those abandonments, but that is the position.

What is left? What are the economic regulations that we can use to help guide the general course of the economy, to influence demand and to bear upon levels of unemployment? We have interest rates, mortgage rates, exchange rates, public spending and deficits. We know that deficits are justifiable in some years and are properly very large, and that in other years they do not make sense and should be non-existent. These judgments have to be made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day. After all, such decisions go to the essence of his Budget judgment.

What do we find? An entire protocol is devoted to setting out what the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be able to do if the United Kingdom became a full member of an economic and monetary union. The protocol refers to excessive deficits and provides that our Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day shall never have a public service borrowing requirement—I am glad to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) in his place on the Opposition Front Bench—of more than 3 per cent. It seems that that is to be the limit.

That provision would not be merely a voice in the Chancellor's ear, as it were, because the Commission would have the right to make public its advice, which would be to the extreme embarrassment of my right hon. and learned Friend if he happened to be Chancellor. Matters would go further than that, because a system of penalties could be imposed upon a sovereign Government. The penalties would take the form of fines and the stopping of structural funds, for example. It would be as if a Conservative Minister were dealing with a rebellious local authority that a Conservative Government did not like and which they thought should be rate-capped. It would not be tolerable for any British Government to accept such a system. It would certainly be intolerable for any Labour Government, who would have a strong reason to intervene in the economy.

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No. I must hasten to complete what I have to say.

We hear about the accountability of the European central bank. It is said that that feature would make it acceptable, but how do we make a European central bank accountable to all the different Ministers of the European Community? I do not think that it is possible to do that, but it is written into the articles of the treaty that the bank shall be independent. Not only that, no one shall take instructions from outside the governing board of the bank. It seems that no one from outside shall seek to give instructions to the bank.

That is not acceptable. We shall find ourselves handcuffed and chained under economic and monetary union. No instruments of policy will be left for us to use. The present problem with the exchange rate mechanism is well known to the Treasury and, of course, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who would like more freedom. At present, he would like to lower interest rates, but he is trapped within the bands of the exchange rate mechanism, for reasons of which we are aware.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No. I wish to draw to a rapid conclusion. I know that many other right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak.

The concept of federation should be examined much more closely than hitherto, and with a good deal more sense of history. There are, I believe, 160 sovereign nations in the world of all sizes and shapes. Many of them are far weaker, less happy and less prosperous than the United Kingdom. I know of none, however, except the countries of the European Community, that are trying to construct federations. Most of them have become nations as a result of escapes from empires or imposed federations.

National feeling is not the great ogre and the great chauvinist horror that has been painted by some. Sometimes it is like that, but it is Janus-headed: on the other side of the coin it is one of the liberating forces for mankind. Let us be clear about that. There should be no shame about our commitment to our independence, to

[Mr. Shore]

self-government and to the democracy that we have, with all its imperfections. Our democracy is a damned sight better in this House than it is anywhere else in Europe.

6.45 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I had a little local difficulty in Committee Room 6 the other day when it came to my position on Europe. Nevertheless, it is a matter of intense importance to us all that we work together, as I said during the debate on the confidence motion last year, to establish a role for the British people over the next 10 or 15 years.

There is much in the motion with which I agree. I acknowledge in my amendment, which has been supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), that at this stage in the negotiations it is proper for the Government to preserve their position and not to disclose everything they will do. I accept that entirely. Having said that, however, I have to say that several matters have been omitted from the motion—omissions that cause me some concern.

First, the motion does not reject the principle of monetary union, which lies at the heart of the debate. It raises in turn the principle of democracy and the manner in which we are able to represent the interests of the people who voted for us to be Members of this Parliament. It is not our Parliament, it is their Parliament. It is important that that point is made in the amendment.

Mr. Walden: I hope that my hon. Friend, when talking about economic and monetary union, will squarely confront the dilemma that faces him, me and every other Member of this place. Whatever our reservations about economic and monetary union, many of which I share with him, what happens to this country if other states adopt an economic and monetary union and a single currency, and the system works? What happens if that brings them trading, economic and military advantages from which we are excluded?

Either our position is that these people, these foreigners, are incompetent and cannot make the system work—that is one view—or it is that we shall be happy even if we are excluded from advantages because we are somehow inherently superior to them and do not mind being economically inferior. Unless the question is faced and answered, the House will not be facing what may be a real economic dilemma.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has made an interesting intervention, but I think that he has not asked the real question. The first question that must be asked and answered is whether we are prepared to trade off the democracy that is inherent in the House for a system that will not necessarily deliver the benefits that my hon. Friend has mentioned. The two things are not mutually exclusive.

We can achieve price stability, surely, by our own efforts. We can work within the European Community to help that to happen, and that is why I voted for the Single European Act. That, however, has nothing to do with the matters that my hon. Friend has mentioned. When we examine the mechanics that have been set up by the proposed central bank, it is clear that unelected and unaccountable bankers will be determining this country's economic policies and, therefore, those of my constituents and those of every other Member.

Under present arrangements, we can arrive at decisions for ourselves while we work within the European Community at the same time. There is no need for us to take this next step. Because I believe that that is the fundamental democratic right of the British people, I hope that we will reject the principle of monetary union.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I hope that my hon. Friend will deal with political union, which means effectively the extinction of Great Britain, Britishness, British influence and all that we stand for. Can my hon. Friend explain why, when we have just seen the disintegration of the fallacy of a bogus supranational state at one end of Europe, it seems sensible to create one at the other end?

Mr. Cash: I could not agree more with my hon. and learned Friend. Nothing is more absurd than for us to see what has happened in the USSR during the past six months and in Yugoslavia and eastern Europe and to observe that those people have fought for and obtained their freedom when we are being drawn, some would say by some kind of historical inevitability, in the opposite direction. That cannot make sense. Surely hon. Members on both sides of the House appreciate the inherent contradiction of that.

Mr. Tony Banks: How can the hon. Gentleman possibly make a useful comparison between the break-up of an empire under Stalinism in eastern Europe with the coming together of mature democracies in a voluntary process within the EC?

Mr. Cash: The answer to the hon. Gentleman is simply that, if he looks at the new proposed constitution for the Union of Sovereign States, he will see that the one thing that it does is to make sure that it does not go down the route that I understand he would propose we go down now. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman considers that.

Secondly, there is much talk about the vague word "subsidiarity". I think that it means whatever anyone wants it to mean. However, as I have said on previous occasions, quoting from Lewis Carroll,

"The question is . . . which is to be Master—that's all."

When I observed the emphasis that was placed in the motion on the superior European competence at the expense of the national competence that was to be prescribed under the motion, and when I looked at the question of economic and monetary union and asked myself where the main powers will be dealt with under the principle of subsidiarity, I concluded—I do not believe for a minute that any hon. Member would contradict me—that they will be dealt with at the top by the unelected and unaccountable bankers.

At the same time, that will strike at the heart of democracy and the rights of our constituents. That is why I object to it. There is an inherent deceit in the concept. I regret that that is a problem which permeates so much of this hall of mirrors that we experience in relation to the EC.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that, because the Federal Republic of Germany has the Bundesbank, it is not a democratic country? That is the same argument.

Mr. Cash: The Bundesbank is nothing like as independent as it is made out to be. Articles 9 and 12 of the Basic Law make it perfectly clear that the Bundesbank has responsibility for currency stability, but subject to the overall political control of the German Government.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that sooner or later the European Court of Justice will have to offer a definition of the legal concept of subsidiarity?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman and I sit on the Select Committee on European Legislation, and we have discussed that matter on many occasions. All the matters which will be gathered together under the broad concept of subsidiarity will go to the court. That is why, in the speeches that we have heard today, some distinction has been drawn between those competencies which are to go to the Court of Justice and the others which the Government rightly want to keep out because they are pillars of co-operation which must be dealt with in terms of intergovernmental co-operation. The problem is that, once the European Court of Justice has been allowed to become involved in questions relating to budget deficit and so on, we shall have opened a Pandora's box of problems, because the court will not be able to make the right decisions.

Furthermore, the constitution which has been laid down for the European central bank will not make the decisions any easier to make. They will still be political decisions. However, the difference is that no one will know whom to blame; no one will know how to get rid of them. The central bank is to have complete independence. If it makes decisions which are inherently wrong, what will happen? It is precisely because, over the past 300 years, the House has developed a concept of democratic accountability in relation to the redress of grievance, taxation, the economy and all that goes with it that we can fairly and properly represent the interests of our constituents.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) talked about the sovereignty of Parliament. That was an extraordinary way in which to put his arguments across. It is not the sovereignty of Parliament that matters; it is the sovereignty of the individual who goes to the ballot box, has a free choice and makes his decision, for which people have fought and died. We do not have to apologise for that, nor do we need to be pessimistic and defeatist, economically or politically, about our ability to produce results which are in the interests of the British people. But at the same time we can work within the framework of the EC. I voted for the Single European Act. I was a founding member of Westminster for Europe in the 1970s. But I have always felt that it was essential to maintain a realistic and practical approach to its development.

That brings me to my next point—the European Parliament. I do not believe that it would be right to extend the powers of the European Parliament in principle in a way that would have the effect of taking away the responsibility of Ministers to answer questions in the House exclusively in relation to matters of competence which apply to the United Kingdom. That raises the question of what those competencies should be and takes me back to the point about subsidiarity.

Once that enormous cavern of uncertainty has been opened up, we shall enter the grey hole which lies at the centre of the Government's motion. That is why I tabled my amendment. I felt that it was necessary to try to address the question of what was left out of the motion in order to concentrate hon. Members' minds on what it is that we should be addressing.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that the question of subsidiarity is vital to our consideration of the matter and that it would be completely unsatisfactory if disputes of subsidiarity were referred to the European Court of Justice, particularly in view of its record? If subsidiarity were defined in the treaty, would it not be better for there to be another body to consider disputes regarding subsidiarity? My hon. Friend knows what I have in mind—it has been suggested in this place, by the French Gaullists and by the Irish—that we should have a separate body composed of members of member Governments and our Government to make such decisions rather than the Court of Justice.

Mr. Cash: I should be more inclined to go down my hon. Friend's route than the one proposed, because I see the most terrible difficulties emerging. What worries me when I hear people speaking, understandably, about the aims of the Community, and saying that we want peace, prosperity, stability, and all that goes with them, is that I believe that we are seeing the development of a policy that was devised in the 1950s for absolutely correct reasons at the time, in dealing with the aftermath of the second world war, and with the cold war, but which has been displaced by the bringing down of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany.

It is precisely because I believe that some of the policies adumbrated by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), for example, are based on the thinking of the 1950s and 1960s but are not relevant to what is happening in the 1990s, that I become so worried. I look around the world and see tremendous instability and uncertainty, such as in Yugoslavia and the USSR, and ask myself what will happen if the central bank starts to lay down rules that some of those countries cannot obey.

What will happen if the policies included in all the treaties were implemented by majority voting? Mr. Chevenement told my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 4 January—I read this in *The Economist*—

"If there was majority voting in relation to these matters, there will be no Gulf war."

The consequence of that would have been such that it is doubtful that the Americans would have been able to embark on that conflict on their own.

The new arrangement that we are being encouraged to adopt will create not stability and prosperity, but tension and instability, because, if one tries to compress together people of different cultures and languages, has a European Parliament that will be largely a neuter, and does not have that basic democratic line between a Member of Parliament and his constituents, a Minister on the Government Front Bench who is answerable to Members of Parliament, and thereafter the Council of Ministers, I guarantee that we will end up with a system which is undemocratic, and which will create confusion followed by instability and tension—when it is exactly the opposite of that for which I would hope, from all the developments in eastern Europe and the USSR over the past two years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the House that speeches between now and 10 minutes to 9 o'clock must be limited to 10 minutes.

7.2 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I agree with some of the concluding remarks of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) about the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). I am convinced that he could have made that speech five or even 10 years ago, because it wholly ignored the convulsive context in which we are making decisions today about our future in the European Community.

For 45 years, Europe has enjoyed a peace of sorts—a peace based not on the European Community, or even on nuclear deterrence and nuclear power, but on the crude partitioning of Europe and the post-war settlement created by Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill. That was the basis of post-war peace. That post-war arrangement succeeded because it addressed itself to the two fundamental issues that caused war before. It prevented territorial changes and divided Europe so that some form of balance-of-power relationship and a sphere of influence were created.

Peace was paid for at a heavy price—at the price of freedom for the peoples of Hungary in 1956, and of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of hundreds of thousands behind the Berlin wall in the 1960s and thereafter. Within the past two years, we have seen before our very eyes the dissolution and destruction of that post-war settlement and the emergence of new problems. It would be enough of a challenge to devise a new European order to replace the post-war settlement, but this year we are witnessing also the dissolution of nuclear super-power. Measured against those challenges, the treaties, drafts, and constitutional changes proposed by Ministers of the Twelve are at best all irrelevant, and at worst obstacles in the way of finding solutions to the real European problems that now confront us. The remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East did not once address those aspects.

We now face a major new European order. Those of us who are sceptical about the way that we should progress with the proposed treaties are not narrow-minded Europeans. The narrow-minded Europeans are those who are looking to create institutional ossification, in the form of institutions of the kind that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

I remind the House that the Common Market was created by the visions of Jean Monnet and others, but was rooted in the cold war. It created a number of institutions in a cold-war Europe, and I am sorry that the Prime Minister did not mention until the last few minutes of his speech the Community's role in addressing the problems that confront Europe today. It is amazing that, at a time when we are watching the constitutions of eastern and western Europe crumble, together with state-centred, non-pluralistic systems of politics and economics, we should be seeking to create—as the treaties will, if they are unamended—a more centralist, less pluralistic, economic and political system for the Community's 12 member states.

That—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made clear in the illustration that he gave from the treaty—is at the heart of the problem. At the very moment when we are seeing, rightly, the abandonment of constitutions that incorporate phoney, immutable laws, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, the treaties seek to create half-baked economic maxims of their own. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said, what place is there in a treaty or in a constitution for Europe that tries to create relationships between the diverse cultures and characters of even the 12 countries that comprise the present Community for such half-baked examples of economic theory as that which would dictate that public borrowing should not exceed 3 per cent. of gross domestic product? That is just as nonsensical a maxim to write into a constitution as that which imposed the dictatorship of the proletariat in the past in the countries of eastern Europe.

Irrespective of the practical arguments, clause after clause of the European monetary union draft articles seek to impose a rigid form of economic behaviour. There is nothing pluralist or democratic about centralist nonsense such as that to be found in article 106:

> "Where exercising the powers and carrying out the tasks and duties conferred upon them . . . neither the ECB, nor a national central bank . . . shall seek or take instructions"

from any democratically elected body, Government, nation, or combinations thereof. Is that the right basis for a pluralistic, democratic Community and society? It is the very reverse. It is the constitution of a potential corporate state, however democratically based it might be. I will not support any treaties that come before the House that include provisions of that kind.

Our priorities and energies must be directed at finding solutions to the broader, new European order, which is absolutely essential given the drastic changes that have occurred in central and eastern Europe. We must bring within the fold of the Twelve Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, whose freedoms were destroyed by the cold war. We must incorporate them in a direct working relationship, and give the fullest possible support to their liberty and democracy.

The treaties will do nothing to help that process. They will merely entrench the division of Europe rather than widening it. I believe that the only way to bolster the relationship between central European states and the Twelve is to reach out, politically at first and then economically, and thus bring the two groups together. Unless we do that, we shall not see a new European order that will provide peace and collective security by devising institutions and relationships to prevent conflicts such as the one in Yugoslavia, and others that may emerge on our television screens. Instead, we shall return to the old European order that led to tensions and territorial disputes, and to the great powers—and other powers—fishing in waters that did not belong to them.

At this stage in the history of Europe, it is especially important not to ossify the existing relationship of the Twelve in the form of new treaties. We should reach out to a broader Europe. That, I believe, will bring us all peace and prosperity in the 1990s.

7.10 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Sadly, the Leader of the Opposition has not matured sufficiently to avoid the schoolboy technique of answering an awkward question with an insult, and then using the row that that provokes as an excuse for not giving way to further interventions. That was a bad start to a speech that did not get much better.

The most fervent admirers of Brussels would, I think, find it difficult to describe the Commission as anything other than its own worst enemy. *The Sunday Times* has rehearsed some of the more familar reasons—for instance, the definition of the carrot as a fruit, enabling it to be brought within the terms of some obscure directive; a Greek Commissioner's abuse of the Commission's competence in health and safety, in an attempt to restrict Sunday working hours; the extraordinary antics of an Italian Commissioner in regard to environmental matters; and the long-running and more deep-seated farce of the common agricultural policy.

None of those examples is a great advertisement for the Commission and its works, and it is not surprising that many of our constituents consequently regard Brussels as, in a sense, the headquarters of a hostile power. I therefore welcome the aim of the negotiations—to make the Commission liable to inspection, invigilation and close scrutiny on the part of the European Parliament. That can only be for the good, and it is long overdue.

None the less, it is not the central issue. I have no difficulty in supporting the Government's motion, which effectively sets out the other issues that must be given greater priority. I am sure that the Government and the Prime Minister have taken the right attitude on the question of a common foreign policy: it is idle to suppose that such policy can be formed other than by consensus, and it was a great waste of time to air the subject at all. The same applies to defence policy. It would clearly be impossible for Her Majesty's forces to be asked to risk their lives in support of a military venture that the House did not support.

Policies on immigration and asylum are integral to national identity. They must be determined by the House, and the Government were right to insist on that in their motion. Some Opposition Members may well see the Maastricht negotiations as an opportunity to try and introduce socialism into the country by the back door—no doubt they will disclaim any such motives, but it occurs to me as a possibility—and I am equally sure that Conservative Members are right to resist such an intrusion into our democratic process.

Existing Community organs and agreements must be made to work better. That applies especially to competition policy. I do not know whether all hon. Members are familiar with some of the vagaries of European practice. Under Dutch company law, for instance, a company that is threatened with a takeover can clone its own shares, enabling the directors to double their voting rights. I do not believe that that is consistent with 1992—any more than I believe that the ability of the French to invoke the interêt national at the drop of a hat is consistent with the level playing field that we all seek to achieve. I hope, and believe, that we shall continue to make swift progress on those points.

I find it encouraging that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has been able to secure an amendment to article 171, under which it will be possible for defaulting states to be taken to court, prosecuted and fined if they fail to conform to the directives by which they should be bound. I hope that the Commission and the courts will not hesitate; there are too many laggards under the arrangements that are supposed to exist in our so-called common system.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly attached importance to the interests of European non-member states—both the members of the European Free Trade Association, and the countries that have emerged from behind the iron curtain into a new freedom —and to the need for us to enable them to join the Community when they are ready. If we close the door against them, we shall be doing Europe, and ourselves, a great disservice. However, I have not yet heard as much as I should like to hear about the interests of some other European member states; perhaps I shall later.

I have heard—and I believe it to be true—that Chancellor Kohl is anxious for Maastricht to be used as an opportunity to bind Germany into the European Community. I have also heard that the French Government share that objective. Given the history of both countries, that is understandable; but, if it is so much in the interests of France and Germany, I think it only fair for them to pay the principal cost of the rope that will do the binding. We should be cautious about the extent to which we commit ourselves to sacrifices that may be made for ends that do not represent our own top priorities.

I understand that there are people known as Euro-fanatics; some may not be far from the House at this moment. I do not necessarily quarrel with such people, because their views are sincerely held, but they sometimes seem to fall into the same category as the famous mountaineer who, when asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest, replied, "Because it is there." When I made that comparison to someone today, he said, "That is not wholly fair. There is a difference: Mallory could have walked away from Everest—he did not have to climb it —but we cannot walk away from Europe."

There is truth in that, and we should not forget it. We are a European nation, and we cannot alter our status now. There is another option, however, and it is significant that the Prime Minister stated it so clearly today. Mallory and Irving could have waited until conditions improved; they did not have to make a dash for the summit. So, if necessary, can we.

We are under no compulsion. The Prime Minister has the freedom to wait. We must encourage him to exercise it, if he thinks that that is right, rather than commit this country to anything at Maastricht. He must deploy the best and the most powerful case in support of British interests. We want the Prime Minister to return from Maastricht having successfully negotiated an agreement that will win the support of this House.

7.19 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I am a lifetime supporter of British membership of the European Community, but I have never believed that that support implies acceptance of a united states of Europe. The Social Democratic party will support the Prime Minister's motion. We believe that it represents the best way forward, not just for this country but for Europe. I wish that we had been able during the last few months to persuade our European colleagues that we are not arguing just for a narrow British position. I want a common foreign policy and a common defence policy. I want the maximum degree of unity, but I also want a treaty to be constructed that carries no inexorable commitment to a united states of Europe.

We cannot stop our European partners arguing for a united states of Europe. They are entitled to do that in a free European democracy, but we are entitled to hold our

[Dr. David Owen]

ground and to argue that we as a nation were never committed to a united states of Europe in 1973, that we are not committed to it now and that we do not intend to pre-empt that decision.

The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), was in danger of being, like a tram, stuck in a groove. She referred to the debate on Jacques Delors proposals in 1989. They were anathema to all of us. They sought to impose a single currency on all Community states. We do not sufficiently realise that we are no longer discussing a treaty that, like a tree, has grown only from the trunk of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the treaty of Rome. We are now discussing treaties that are based on three or four separate pillars.

I accept that all aspects relating to the single market fall under the treaty of Rome and carry a commitment to more powers for the European Commission and the European Parliament. We cannot interpret the single market as narrowly as some Conservative Members of Parliament. It embraces social factors and the environment. It will pay us to recognise that. The right hon. Member for Finchley was right to concede majority voting so that the single market could be in operation by 1993.

Those of us who desperately want Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary to be admitted to the European Community during this decade, with the transition over by the year 2000 before they are economically ready for it, have to accept that majority voting will be needed if the single market is to be operational in former command communist economies. It is geopolitically essential that we put Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria before Sweden, Finland and Norway in terms of membership. An exact parallel can be drawn with Spain, Portugal and Greece when they were admitted early for political and democratic reasons.

When I look at the European Community I see foreign policy and internal security pillars and ask myself how well the Government have been able to keep them purely intergovernmental and how many commitments we are making that will damage British interests in the future. My major concern about the Maastricht negotiations relates to the limited majority decision making envisaged for foreign policy. I do not see how we can separate principle from practice, policy from implementation.

I beg the Foreign Secretary to look again at this issue with the utmost scepticism. I understand the intention—of wanting to try to make a conciliatory gesture—but this could be the thin end of a very dangerous wedge. The Prime Minister's formulation is that it is for the other 11 member states now to demonstrate to us in watertight treaty terms that the right of all member states to determine their own foreign policies is not being abandoned or abdicated.

I say that for another reason. I still have grave doubts as to whether it is right to go for a single currency, fixed exchange rates and the whole of that considerable abdication of political sovereignty. I recognise, however, that sovereignty, as with most other things, moves with the times. It may be considered to be a vital British interest that we are not on the outside of the single currency in five years' time. That judgment will have to be made at that time. I do not know how we can make that judgment until we have seen the texture of the decision that we are being asked to make.

One thing, however, is clear. We cannot have a single currency, a single immigration policy, a single foreign policy and a single defence policy without being a united states of Europe. If we go for a single currency because we wish to protect, above all, the position of the City of London—still the premier financial centre of Europe—and if we also concede ground on foreign policy, in terms of majority decision making, and on defence policy by creating effectively a defence community, and if we allow the Commission to issue visitors' visas, we shall be on a slippery slope. This House would then resist even more the move towards a single currency than it might otherwise have done.

That is the advantage of postponing the decision on a single currency. We should not find it easy to go for a single currency if we had already moved down the federalist route in a dangerous way on foreign and defence policies. It is in the interests of this country, therefore, to stand firmer now on foreign policy than appears to be the Government's position. Frankly, I do not believe that there should have been all this talk about a little bit of majority voting on foreign policy.

It would be better if the Government made concessions in other areas. I know that it will be difficult. Some of them may involve social policies; others may involve environmental policies on which we shall have to give ground during the next 10, 15 or 20 years. It is essential, however—if we do not want a united states of Europe to retain the right, within a co-operative framework to try to forge a consensus on foreign policy—to make our own decisions.

The treaty on foreign policy carries with it more than a commitment to co-ordinate our policies. That can lead only to a number of results. It means that Britain will no longer have a permanent presence in the Security Council in 10 or 15 years' time. It also means that there will be occasions when decisions cannot be taken, such as that taken by the former Prime Minister at Aspen, with President Bush, to put troops into Saudi Arabia. Such decisions will not be able to be made by a single Prime Minister without reference back. The present Prime Minister would be unable to come out of No. 10 Downing street and say, "We are standing by the constitution of the USSR and we condemn the coup as unconstitutional." That was quite different from what was said by President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl.

If we value independence in foreign policy making, let us not forget what happened in 1940. If we want to have that freedom again—to stand out against the trend and, if necessary, to be on our own—then I pray that the Government will look hard at the question of retaining the right of a single foreign policy, with the decisions made by this country alone. In that context—*[Interruption.]* I do not know what Labour Members are saying. All I know is that the Labour Government, who were in favour of the European Community, did not need any convincing that they were not in favour of a federalist united states of Europe. The danger is the convert being more zealous than the Pope in suddenly believing that we can abdicate on all issues of policy. If the Labour party is abdicating the right to retain foreign and defence policy in this country, it is not speaking for the country, and the Government will exploit that against it in the next general election.

7.29 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I make no secret of my gratitude for being a member of a fortunate generation who have not been called on to fight in Europe. There are coats of arms all around the Chamber of hon. Members who gave their lives for peace in Europe. I thank those who fought for that gift and who built the lasting institutions of NATO and the European Community from the ruins of 1945. We should never forget their origins, nor the driving force among continental Europeans who suffered occupation and war on their soil. The driving force of a European structure that would end the fear of war on the continent is sometimes not fully understood in these islands.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said, the Community is a living thing. It has advanced at the pace of its peoples and must continue to do so. Maastricht is a further part of that evolution—not the end of it. Historically, it is less significant than the passing of the Single European Act in 1986.

My hopes for Maastricht are twofold. Firstly, I hope that we shall use Maastricht to reiterate our concerns about what is wrong with the European Community. The Commission is outside a sensible structure of democratic accountability and has shown a tendency to impose a Euro-synthesis at micro-level—silly proposals for the nooks and crannies of our life that antagonise the man and woman in the street.

Sadly, that insensitivity to national sympathies undermines the fundamental principles of European co-operation and has helped to build a stronger anti-European feeling in this country than is truly justified. We are right, therefore, and are acting in the best interests of the Community and this country, to seek to correct such unnecessary Commission interference by expanding the role of the European Parliament.

I hope, too, that we can convince our neighbours about the sensitivity of time. The past 45 years are but a fraction of more than 2,000 years of recorded European civilisation, yet we have achieved much. There is no need to settle the final irrevocable shape of Europe at Maastricht. Indeed, there may never be such a thing. Forcing nations together too quickly risks undermining the progress that we have made. We seem to be more alert to that than many others; hence our firm determination, which was re-emphasised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon, to make subsidiarity work. That must be the right way to progress.

Secondly, I wish to see our participation at Maastricht emphasising and improving those matters on which the Community is going in the right direction. It would be a tragedy, as some have argued, to see the door closed on closer economic convergence with the prospect of a single European currency at the end of it. I do not believe that our European neighbours will hang back from this for long. They have, on the whole, run fairly successful economies since the 1950s or since their accession to the Community. They firmly believe that greater economic rigour, based, it must be said, broadly on Conservative principles, will continue that prosperity. They have some claim to know what they are doing.

Should it be proved to the satisfaction of the House that the benefits that I have described will accrue, any decision to stay outside would be of immense disadvantage to us. Foreign investors would see us not as the launch pad to Europe but as some backwater. For those whom we represent—for their employment, standards of living and the standards of their families—those should be the major guides to our thinking on Europe.

I hope that we shall make progress, along the cautious lines suggested by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon, on a common foreign and defence policy. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was right in his analysis of Yugoslavia: nations forced together ultimately come apart. But those that come together for mutual support can and do survive.

The real genie that has emerged from the bottle of a changing Europe is nationalism. What structure can be devised to contrain the pressures and forces behind that? Are we truly prepared to offer no model of co-operating nations sinking their differences to achieve greater security, or are we prepared to live with a Europe that is increasingly fragmented, where nations' first demand on sovereignty is to equip themselves with weapons to tackle or to defend themselves from new nations on their own borders that have the same heightened state of frenzy and determination to do the same? We cannot be sanguine about the emergence of nationalism and the fragmentation of Europe. The European Community could provide a structure for people to bury their differences, not their dead.

At the end of the debate, the House will give its support for the Prime Minister carrying on playing a full part in European evolution—an evolution about which we have been too hesitant for too long. For too long, we have been hidebound by fears borne of self-selected memories and infused by a false jingoism—a vision of Europe in which Britain sees itself surrounded solely by enemies and not friends.

That is not an image of Europe that my generation sees from its experience of visiting Europe and its peoples. My generation delights in being British. Who delude themselves that the greatest attributes of our national character begin and end in this House? My generation also delights in the glory of all that is best in being European —its art, music, languages and modern-day prosperity, which are visible in European cities and all too often put ours to shame. We delight in Europe's architecture—or at least the architecture that has survived the bombing, destruction and mayhem that have been the legacy of hundreds of years of war in Europe, when the cause of nationalism has been invoked to unleash the slaughter that dragged young men from these islands to their untimely deaths.

My generation will not listen to those who will close the door on further European development. We have no blueprint for where, eventually, we or our children will go, but I know that we do not want to be isolated and alone, buffeted by currents and currency over which we have no say and no control and excluded from greater co-operation with European Conservative friends in sister parties who seek our help in building a lasting Europe.

If sovereignty is misused to mean the freedom to be poor and to miss out on economic benefits acquired by our neighbours, it is not a freedom that I seek for my constituents. The torch is passing from those who fought for peace in Europe and who nursed its early steps to those who will take it further, curbing its excesses and building on its strengths. This will be to the benefit of our nation, other European nations and the Community as a whole.

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

Labour Front-Bench spokemen, with their inconsistent and embarrassing record on Europe, cannot lead our people on this issue. They have neither confidence nor credibility. Only my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary can do that. I believe that they have a greater vision of Europe, away from the narrow, and I am proud to stand four square behind that.

7.38 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): In the referendum, I voted against our continued membership of the EC. I believed that, as a fundamentally undemocratic institution dedicated by its founding fathers to the free movement of capital and labour, it would be used to undermine many of the great social gains made in this country in the past 100 years. In particular, I believed that it would be used to undermine an elected British Government dedicated, as the Labour party is, to the fair distribution of wealth and power.

I also believed—and I still do—that it was then at least arguable that this country, with its vast reserves of coal, gas and oil, its huge fishing grounds and an assured supply of relatively cheap foodstuffs from the Commonwealth, stood a good chance of prospering outside the European Community. Many of us who voted against the European Community did not anticipate that we were about to embark on a 12-year period in which Britain would be ruled by a Government well to the right of that of all other members of the European Community, by a Government who had far less regard for the welfare of our least fortunate citizens and for our environment than the unelected mandarins of the European Commission.

I do not know whether it was right for Britain to join the European Community. It is early days yet, and the jury is still out. It will be for historians in another century to decide whether it was right or wrong. However, I accept that there is no going back—that, like it or not, Britain will be a member of the European Community for the foreseeable future and that we must therefore do what we can to ensure that the Community develops in a way that is beneficial to all our citizens and, indeed, to the human race as a whole. If we are to maximise our influence, we must enter into a positive dialogue with our partners and not give the impression that we are sullen and resentful.

There are several obvious benefits that we should acknowledge from the outset, the first of which is a common defence and foreign policy. I look forward to that —it does not cause me any problems, with great respect to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). A common foreign and defence policy would release this country from its slavish dependence on the United States, which has been the shameful hallmark of all post-war British foreign policy under Governments of both parties.

The second advantage of EC membership derives from the exchange rate mechanism, although that advantage is not unqualified. As some hon. Members have said, I accept that there are disadvantages. There is a powerful argument that, by joining the ERM, we have effectively surrendered control of our economy to the central bank. I do not know whether that is so, but I do not believe that either the central bank or the German bankers could make a bigger mess than the Treasury and our bank have done in the past two decades.

The one advantage of ERM membership is that it would no longer be possible for the Tories and their friends in the City to organise the run on sterling that traditionally accompanies the elections of a Labour Government. *[Laughter.]* Perhaps the Tories think that it would be, in which case I hope they will tell us, but Labour would no longer be held to ransom by speculators as it has been in the past. That is a major advantage not only for the next Labour Government but for the health of democracy in this country.

My main criticism of the European Community—and it is a large one—is that it is fundamentally undemocratic. Unelected Commissioners supported by an enormous and remote bureaucracy have arrogated to themselves powers for which they are virtually unaccountable. The European Parliament is unwieldly and cumbersome, and it is hard to see how, with its present organisation, it could be otherwise. I believe that any further power ceded to the Commissioners and to the bureaucracy in Brussels should be conditional on the introduction of democracy to EC institutions.

Those who hold power should be subject to rigorous scrutiny by those who are elected and who are, in turn, accountable to their constituents. That is a fundamental principle. I do not believe that the solution is necessarily to give more power to the European Parliament—national Parliaments might be the most effective means of holding to account those who represent our interests in Europe. It is time that we at Westminster adapted our procedures to enable proper scrutiny of what is done on our behalf by Ministers and officials who represent us in Europe.

As I said, it is too early to say whether we were right to join the European Community. I accept that, now that we are a member, we have a duty to make it work, and to do so in a positive spirit. If the EC's institutions are to command public confidence, they must demonstrate that they are concerned with more than—as the treaty of Rome implies—the merciless application of the free market.

I welcome the social charter. Indeed, I want to see it beefed up. I welcome the recent interest of EC commissioners in environmental standards, and I look forward to the day when they lay down minimum standards for the treatment of farm animals. That is a matter on which a Labour Government could take a lead. However, I equally understand that some Conservative Members of Parliament do not welcome such developments. When they signed us up into the EC without asking the British people, they thought that we were joining a rich man's club which would be exclusively preoccupied with the interests of capital. They thought that they and their friends would have the freedom to go on looting our country without reference to higher authority. It has come as a shock to many of them that the European Community has developed broader horizons. Long may it continue to do so.

I believe that the greatest test of the European Community will be the way in which it relates to what are surely the two greatest issues of our time—the survival of the planet and the benign development of the earth's resources for the benefit of all human beings, not merely for those who are fortunate enough to live within the EC. If a federal European Community becomes merely another great power which is motivated solely by

self-interest and which throws its weight around accordingly, we shall have failed. I hope that we do not fail.

7.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Ridley (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullen), who regards the issue as a capitalist plot, because many of the capitalists among my colleagues appear to be unhappy about their own plot.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on a clear exposition of our position and on setting out his stall so clearly. When the Tory Whips put it about in the summer that they did not think that there would be any trouble about economic and monetary union but that they were worried about the political union treaty, my suspicions were immediately aroused, and they remained so. Having heard my right hon. Friend, I believe that he has a good appreciation of the ground that should properly be given at Maastricht on political union, and I shall therefore concentrate on economic and monetary union.

I wish to complain about the Commission's slogan, "One market, one money; single market, single money." One might as well say, "Single men, single beds". The two do not necessarily follow, and the same is true of the market. I believe that the purpose of the Maastricht summit is to determine the next period of Europe's evolution and that it is a vitally important event. The issues at stake are not merely what is good for Britain or for the Tory party or how to win the election—although those matters are important—but the correct future course for Europe.

We must consider the effects of a single currency not merely on ourselves but on the other 11 members. My right hon. Friend rightly insists on convergence. I agree that it is ridiculous to think of a single currency unless there is convergence, but if there is convergence, there is no need for an institutionalised single currency and an institutionalised central bank. If there is no convergence or if, once convergence has been achieved, it is followed by divergence—which is all too likely—a single currency will of course not work, because it will be put under such strain by the non-converging or the diverging member states that it will break apart.

The only remedies in the hands of the authorities are grants. If grants which have been described as "massive" or "of disproportionate size" are to be paid, those who pay them resent them and those who receive them believe them to be inadequate. The result is tension and, eventually, a move towards separatist and nationalist parties. I hardly dare say it, but we have observed such a phenomenon in Scotland as a result of the single currency between England and Scotland.

We must have convergence, and convergence can take place without any need to institutionalise it. That brings me to an issue that I wish to stress. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) and others have said that, if we do not join the single currency, or if we do not allow one to take place at Maastricht, the other 11 will go ahead and fix it. Yes, I think that they probably will. However, they would do so outside the treaty of Rome—outside the framework.

There would be several big differences. First, any grants that are payable under the single currency from the rich to the poor, or to the people who cannot keep up or who diverge, will be paid by members of that little club, not by the people who are not part of that club. That must be right. Secondly, the countries concerned would suffer the same problems of divergence, and of how to produce the grants to compensate the least successful. Those countries will find that they have great problems in managing a single currency, because Europe is so divergent.

Thirdly, there are many examples of small countries trading highly successfully in large markets. Hong Kong has never been part of a fixed parity arrangement. Canada is another example—*[Interruption.]* Canada has a floating currency with the United States, although it is part of a single market in north America. There is no reason why people who tie themselves to a single currency that proves to be unhelpful should do better—in fact, they will probably do worse—than those who trade in that single market with a currency that is adjustable. It is important that the single market should be a real one.

Let us examine what is on offer in the Dutch provisional treaty for Maastricht on the economic and monetary union aspect. What is on offer is that we should be able to have an exemption, but there are four or five defects in the nature of that exemption of which the House should be aware.

First, we shall have to be subjected to the monitoring and scrutiny of our budget deficit. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others have rightly found that objectionable in a sovereign Parliament. The ultimate remedy of discipline, such as fining us or stopping us having grants, would not be available if we had the exemption, but the whole panoply of a public rocket to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the size of his budget deficit would be found highly embarrassing by hon. Members, and they would resent it if it ever happened.

Secondly, in the preamble to the draft treaty which concerns the principles, there are strong and unequivocal aspirations towards adopting a single currency. Under Community law, that puts a tremendous onus on us to behave in conjunction with that ultimate objective and ultimately to join. People have criticised my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) for allowing the Single European Act to go through because of the preamble. Is not the lesson from that that we should take note of the preamble to the Dutch treaty and that we should wonder whether the preamble should be altered so that it does not apply to those who are exempt? The draft treaty brings in the full panoply of the treaty of Rome and the whole legal apparatus to enforce compliance with the preamble.

Thirdly, it would automatically fall to us to contribute to the grants, which might be massive, that have to be paid from rich to poor even if we were exempt. I stand to be corrected by the Financial Secretary if I am wrong. I believe that the grants would be paid under the structural fund, the social fund and the regional development fund to which we are already signatories and paid-up members —or paying-out members. Whatever excesses resulted from a single currency among the 11, with ourselves being exempt, bills of billions of pounds might land on us for us to subscribe to an enterprise in which we were not taking part. That cannot be right, and I hope that the Financial Secretary will deal with that point when he winds up.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred to eastern Europe. It cannot be

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

right to say that we will build this tight, centrally controlled structure with what is really a common economic policy, run centrally from Brussels through the Economic and Finance Council and through the independent central bank, and to expect the Poles, the Hungarians, the Latvians and who knows who else, to be able suddenly to put their currencies into that system. That would delay by decades the time when we can welcome them on board.

It is not impossible to see membership for those eastern European countries in a short number of years, but if we were to proceed to the single currency described in the Dutch treaty, we should essentially make those countries second-class citizens for decades. We should confine them to taking what is handed out from Brussels, which the European Free Trade Association countries have been forced to accept. Those are the defects.

The future course of Europe will be decided at Maastricht, and important decisions will be made. We should show the type of Europe that we want. It is curious how near we are to unanimity in the House. We want a Europe open to all, we want a free trade area which is open to the world, and we want freely co-operating nation states within that system. If we were to sign up to the concept of the single currency, even if we had an exemption, we should find that we were living with a lie. We should be living with a principle with which we disagreed. That is why I hope that my right hon. Friends will bring back from Maastricht something better than what is on the table from the Dutch.

7.56 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Three points about the debate have interested me. First, there is fundamental agreement among the three party leaders. The Prime Minister is on the eve of negotiations so he has to be cautious. The Leader of the Opposition, who hopes to take over, can be bolder. The Liberal Democrats, who are far from office, can be quite clear about their objective. There is no disagreement about the idea, that we should move from the original membership of the community through the Single European Act to something stronger.

Secondly, a degree of caution has emerged from people who, when they discussed the matter 20 years ago, were far more uncritical. Thirdly—I say this with some satisfaction—21 years after I urged a referendum, I have won the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) to my cause. I had to wait 21 years, but it has been worth waiting for some recognition of the fact that the people have a right to a say in their Government.

I do not want to go over old ground, because this is not a question of yes or no to the status quo; we are looking to the future. Some people genuinely believe that we shall never get social justice from the British Government, but we shall get it from Jacques Delors. They believe that a good king is better than a bad Parliament. I have never taken that view. Others believe that the change is inevitable, and that the common currency will protect us from inflation and will provide a wage policy. They believe that it will control speculation and that Britain cannot survive alone. None of those arguments persuade me because the argument has never been about sovereignty.

I do not know what a sovereign is, apart from the one that used to be in gold and the Pope who is a sovereign in the Vatican. We are talking about democracy. No nation—not even the great United States which could, for all I know, be destroyed by a nuclear weapon from a third-world country—has the power to impose its will on other countries. We are discussing whether the British people are to be allowed to elect those who make the laws under the which they are governed. The argument is nothing to do with whether we should get more maternity leave from Madame Papandreou than from Madame Thatcher. That is not the issue.

I recognise that, when the members of the three Front Benches agree, I am in a minority. My next job therefore is to explain to the people of Chesterfield what we have decided. I will say first, "My dear constituents, in future you will be governed by people whom you do not elect and cannot remove. I am sorry about it. They may give you better creches and shorter working hours but you cannot remove them."

I know that it sounds negative but I have always thought it positive to say that the important thing about democracy is that we can remove without bloodshed the people who govern us. We can get rid of a Callaghan, a Wilson or even a right hon. Lady by internal processes. We can get rid of the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). But that cannot be done in the structure that is proposed. Even if one likes the policies of the people in Europe, one cannot get rid of them.

Secondly, we say to my favourite friends, the Chartists and suffragettes, "All your struggles to get control of the ballot box were a waste of time. We shall be run in future by a few white persons, as in 1832." The instrument, I might add, is the Royal Prerogative of treaty making. For the first time since 1649 the Crown makes the laws—advised, I admit, by the Prime Minister.

We must ask what will happen when people realise what we have done. We have had a marvellous debate about Europe, but none of us has discussed our relationship with the people who sent us here. Hon. Members have expressed views on Albania and the Baltic states. I have been dazzled by the knowledge of the continent of which we are all part. No one has spoken about how he or she got here and what we were sent here to do.

If people lose the power to sack their Government, one of several things happens. First, people may just slope off. Apathy could destroy democracy. When the turnout drops below 50 per cent., we are in danger.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Like the United States.

Mr. Benn: As my hon. Friend says, in the United States turnouts are very low. That is partly caused by the scale of the country.

The second thing that people can do is to riot. Riot is an old-fashioned method of drawing the attention of the Government to what is wrong. It is difficult for an elected person to admit it, but the riot at Strangeways produced some prison reforms. Riot has historically played a much larger part in British politics than we are ever allowed to know.

Thirdly, nationalism can arise. Instead of blaming the treaty of Rome, people say, "It is those Germans," or, "It is the French." Nationalism is built out of frustration that people feel when they cannot get their way through the

ballot box. With nationalism comes repression. I hope that it is not pessimistic—in my view it is not—to say that democracy hangs by a thread in every country of the world. Unless we can offer people a peaceful route to the resolution of injustices through the ballot box, they will not listen to a House that has blocked off that route.

There are many alternatives open to us. One hon. Member said that he was young and had not fought in the war. He looked at a new Europe. But there have been five Europes this century. There was the one run by the King, the Kaiser and the Tsar—they were all cousins, so that was very comfortable. They were all Queen Victoria's grandsons, and there was no nonsense about human rights when Queen Victoria's grandsons repressed people. Then there was the Russian revolution. Then there was the inter-war period. Then there was the Anglo-Soviet alliance. Then there was the cold war. Now we have a Boris Yeltsin who has joined the Monday Club. There have been many Europes. This is not the only Europe on offer.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is a democratic federalist, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). They want an American-type constitution for Europe. It could be that our laws would hang on which way the Albanian members voted. I could not complain about that, because that is democracy, but it is unworkable. It is like trying to get an elephant to dance through a minefield, but it would be democratic.

Another way would be to have a looser, wider Europe. I have an idea for a Commonwealth of Europe. I am introducing a Bill on the subject. Europe would be rather like the British Commonwealth. We would work by consent with people. Or we could accept this ghastly proposal, which is clumsy, secretive, centralised, bureaucratic and divisive. That is how I regard the treaty of Rome. I was born a European and I will die one, but I have never put my alliance behind the treaty of Rome. I object to it. I hate being called an anti-European. How can one be anti-European when one is born in Europe? It is like saying that one is anti-British if one does not agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. What a lot of nonsense it is.

I ask myself why the House is ready to contemplate abandoning its duties, as I fear it is. I was elected 41 years ago this month. This Chamber has lost confidence in democracy. It believes that it must be governed by someone else. It is afraid to use the powers entrusted to it by its constituents. It has traded power for status. One gets asked to go on the telly if one is a Member of Parliament. The Chamber does not want to use its power. It has accepted the role of a spectator and joined what Bagehot called the dignified part of the constitution, leaving the Crown, under the control of the Prime Minister, to be the Executive part.

If democracy is destroyed in Britain, it will be not the communists, Trotskyists or subversives but this House which threw it away. The rights that are entrusted to us are not for us to give away. Even if I agree with everything that is proposed, I cannot hand away powers lent to me for five years by the people of Chesterfield. I just could not do it. It would be theft of public rights.

Therefore, there is only one answer. If people are determined to submit themselves to Jacques Delors, Madam Papandreou and the Council of Ministers, we must tell the people what is planned. If people vote for that, they will all have capitulated. Julius Caesar said, "We are just merging our sovereignty." So did William the Conqueror.

It is not possible to support the Government's motion. I have told the Chief Whip that I cannot support the Labour amendment. I invite the House to vote against the Government's motion and not to support a motion which purports to take us faster into a Community which cannot reflect the aspirations of those who put us here. That is not a nationalist argument, nor is it about sovereignty. It is a democratic argument, and it should be decisive in a democratic Chamber.

8.6 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made an extremely powerful speech. It throws up an interesting possibility which we shall not have the chance to explore. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was still in her former position and the right hon. Gentleman had not been passed over for leadership of the Labour party, perhaps we would now face the possibility of a Finchley-Chesterfield coalition.

I differ from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield on the powers of the House. Many of the powers which he attributes to the House have been taken away from us, not by our choice but as a result of changes in the world. Many decisions about monetary policy over which the House would like to have control have not been made by the House in the years that I have been here—which is few compared with the 41 years of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Early in the right hon. Gentleman's career in the House, many of the powers to which he assigns great democratic importance were taken away by the process of the market and the relationship between nation states. Money now moves through the exchanges 24 hours a day. The Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot suddenly decide that British monetary policy will be such-and-such without paying any attention to what is happening elsewhere in the world. The Chancellor does not ask the House what we should do about monetary policy: he tells us what he is doing. He tells us that he might not like to take a certain step but that interest rates in America are changing, the yen is changing on the world market, the deutschmark is doing this and the French franc is doing that.

It is no good deluding ourselves that we can hang on to something that we do not have. It is much more important to seek ways of overcoming the deficiencies in our control over our national affairs. That has been best achieved by the European Community, despite its faults and the justifiable criticisms that I and many others make. It has ensured the peace of a turbulent continent and the prosperity which acted as the catalyst for the changes in eastern Europe. It was not just the defensive alliance that made that change, important though it was. It was the catalyst provided by the proof that nation states could come together and co-operate not only politically but economically.

The Community enshrines 12 nations—340 million people. It was proof that a liberal, democratic, free-market system was infinitely superior morally and in terms of performance to that which existed in the east.

The origins of the Community were political. They were an attempt to avoid what happened after the first world

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war as a result of the treaty of Versailles, when the French and others tried to impose stiff conditions on Germany. In a generous gesture, the French understood that they could not do so again after the second world war. They decided that they had to try to build structures which would enable Germany to recover without its recovery impinging on French security. If they were to achieve that, it could best be done through common institutions. The House made a classic mistake in the mid-1950s, because we thought that they could not achieve it. We thought that the free market was sufficient as a way for nation states to join together. We were wrong, and the price of our error was that the early character and developments in the Community were not under our control. When we eventually joined in the 1970s, we had not formulated the rules.

Quite unashamedly, the reason that I hope our Prime Minister gets the deal at Maastricht on the conditions that he has laid down, not under any conditions—that is what only the Leader of the Opposition would do—is that I do not want us to make another great error. We have a remarkable opportunity, and that is often not realised in this country. The German Government are prepared to do a deal on the deutschmark, on German foreign policy and on many other aspects of German power because they do not want Europe to return to a battle over spheres of influence. Germany does not want the changes in eastern Europe to be turned into a battleground for western European countries.

The German Government are prepared to give up something and, along with the other 10 countries, they are even prepared to say to the British, "We want you to help us formulate the rules of this club on economic and monetary union, but you do not have to commit yourselves to joining it." That is a remarkable deal. Whether we debate some of the finer points about what might happen pales into insignificance. We have the right to join later; we do not have to join now. That is a clear option and I am sure that it will be achieved. When the details come forth from Maastricht, I am sure that there will be no binding conditions on this country.

Many hon. Members who do not believe, for example, that we need fiscal harmonisation as well as monetary union could argue over the details, but the reality is that within the context of what we are achieving it is a great benefit to this country and we would be sorely wrong if we did not seize it, if we can get in the negotiations what we want.

The same is true of foreign policy. We are not being asked to give up all control over foreign policy, any more than the French would wish to give up control over their foreign policy. We are being asked to try to find common ground with our Community partners, and, if we do so, not to be held up by any one member over detail. That is a solution, albeit not yet perfect. Incidentally, it is important to me that it is not under the full weight of the treaty of Rome, but is on an intergovernmental, parallel basis, as part of a wider treaty of union. Therefore, I support what the Government are doing.

This is a terrific opportunity for us to ensure that our voice, on world affairs and on the great uncertainties that exist close to western European lands, is heard on a basis of coming together to make agreements between countries. If that can be made effective, we shall all feel that we are not only more influential but are likely to be safer.

We should view these big opportunities positively and not merely as negative encroachments on powers that we no longer have in reality. The British Government have a voice in world affairs, but clearly that is because their voice is used to influence countries which are in union with us so that when we go to the United Nations or try to seek solutions to crises we can do so as an effective, combined force. The objectives of the British Government can be better secured by encouraging other people to back us within the Community. That is the definition of a common foreign policy. It does not mean that the Foreign Secretary is tied and must silently do what someone else wants. We should be more proud of our strength of argument than that.

There is a possibility of achieving a Community which can sort out problems that, as many people in this country recognise, are no longer confined by national borders. we have achieved a remarkable development through the objectives that we set out in the Single European Act—an internal market of 340 million people, growing to 380 million with the inclusion of the EFTA countries. People can move between countries. Opportunities are opening up for companies and for people of all ages.

It is inevitable that measures flow from that which will affect the entire Community. After all, it is because of a British initiative that that has been achieved any way. The Government should be trying to ensure that decisions are taken on an enabling rather than an interventionist basis. Of course, we should oppose the imposition of controls which prevent proper competition. That would deny the basis of the success, to date, of a liberal, free-market economy. However, we should not deny the possibility of a Community level of decision-making which, by setting a framework and ensuring by subsidiarity that it is carried out by national Governments, can make Europe richer, better, environmentally safer and a better place in which to work, for all our people.

That is another goal. It is the goal that is opening up at Maastricht. We should seize that opportunity, and we are close to achieving terms of which the House would approve.

8.16 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) will forgive me if I do not follow his arguments, as the time limit applies.

I am reminded of the debates in the early 1970s, and one important speech by the late John Davies—his maiden speech shortly before he became a member of the Cabinet. He said that he had no sense of mandate about entry. There could have been no sense of mandate. That was partly because the Heath Government, when approaching the 1970 election, were well aware of the eloquent arguments that have been advanced in this debate by my right hon. Friends the Members for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). So the Heath Government played it very low profile. That may well lie at the heart of the difficulty. The matter was never faced fairly and squarely by the party which sought to be the Government to take us into the Community in the early 1970s.

I was opposed to entry and spoke against it then, as I spoke against continued membership before the referendum. I did so because of the incompetence of bureaucracy and the waste of the common agricultural policy. That dominated expenditure by about 75 per cent.—a percentage near to the figure which applies today.

That was in the 1970s, but I have to consider the situation for my constituents in 1991. In 1979, we were a great deal more properous in South Yorkshire than we are now. Britain was more prosperous. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Britain was then the sixth wealthiest country in the world. In 1991, after 12 years largely dominated by the right hon. Member for Finchley, who inflicted such a long speech on the House this afternoon, we are not sixth: we have fallen below Belgium and Italy. I have watched the growth in prosperity of countries which were in front of us then and which have soared further ahead, so that the conditions and quality of life of the people there are so much greater than ours. Having led us into decline, the right hon. Member for Finchley is hardly qualified to give advice to the House or instructions to the Prime Minister.

Can my constituents afford Britain to seek to extricate itself from the Community? Can they afford Britain's failure to seize opportunities which will give us the prospect of economic growth and a degree of prosperity which has been largely thrown aside by the present Administration? That very real question looms large.

I should also tell the House that for many years I have been heavily involved in the Council of Europe, so no one can say of me, as they do of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), that I am an anti-European. For a considerable time I described myself as an anti-market pro-European. I have also spent a great deal of time at the Western European Union. I wonder what the Government will do to secure the resources that the WEU will need and the skills that must be applied to ensure that it does not merely become a French preserve or subject to the diktats of Mr. Genscher, as seemed to be the case recently.

I want to see how Europe will react to the appalling needs in the east. One or two Members referred to the severe problem of nationalism. Among the many changes that have taken place since I entered the House in 1970 has been the growth of terror and the imposition of more and more security. The House should understand that the growth and flames of nationalism in Europe could dwarf the terrorism that we experience today in Britain and other parts of western Europe. That nationalism may run amok and engender balkanisation in Europe which would be exceedingly dangerous. Therefore, the rest of Europe must act with co-ordination and co-operation that has not yet been achieved.

If that is to be achieved, the European parliament must first make itself a great deal more efficient and competent than it was when it drove to despair members of a Council of Europe committee that I chaired who sought to co-operate. Secondly, it needs to attract attention. One of the great problems faced by the European Parliament is that the British media pay scarcely any attention to it. Indeed, political parties pay grossly inadequate attention to what goes on there.

If the European Parliament is not held to account, it will not behave accountably. It must have more attention if it is to exert proper influence on the Commissioners. Moreover, it should be prepared to speak out and it should be heard on important questions, such as RECHAR. That brings me to my final point, given the time limitation.

The Government have behaved outrageously in seeking to malign Commissioner Millan for doing his job properly and honestly. In so doing, they have deprived areas of appalling need, such as mine, of the very resources that are readily available and waiting for us. We have been denied them. That is a disgrace. Tory Members may say, "We can't sacrifice sovereignty." Let me finish with this point: how valuable was sovereignty from 1979 until now, in the days of the vast, docile majority enjoyed by this Government who have brought Britain to a greater decline than any Government this century? [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Let me finish.

Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen knew, for example, that HMS Endurance was being withdrawn from the south Atlantic. That mistake cost £8 billion. Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen applauded the grossly unnecessary conflict and cost of the coalfield dispute in 1984-85. That also cost £8 billion. There are scores of further examples of waste and wantonness, not least the poll tax. In the end, that may have cost the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) her job, but it will cost the British people £20 billion in grossly unnecessary administrative expenditure.

Where there is a majority that can coolly and calmly endorse the stupidity and wanton irresponsibility of this Government and troop without question through the Lobby in support of that Government, can we justly claim that Parliament is acting with wisdom in its use of that sovereignty, to which this evening so many pretentious remarks have been addressed?

8.24 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): One can tell that there are some odd currents running in this debate when the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who was in splendid form, rejoices at the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in his plans for a plebiscite or referendum to resolve these issues.

If a Back-Bench dimension has emerged from this afternoon's debate, in addition to the points made by the Leader of the Opposition and the excellent and comprehensive speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, it is that we should give maximum attention to what is happening in the other part of Europe. It is to remind the great policy-makers and the people lining up for the decisions at Maastricht, who seem so preoccupied, that, even since the original idea of intergovernmental conferences was conceived 18 months ago, the map of Europe has changed completely. Fundamentally new issues and priorities have emerged. New dangers have emerged. New requirements and priorities should perhaps have a higher place on the agenda than the undeniably important issues with which we have been concerned as we examine the minutiae of the Dutch draft treaty.

What has happened is indeed sobering. Perhaps we should pay more attention to the enormous rumbling dangers now developing in eastern Europe. I do not just mean in the former Soviet Union, which is looking into the abyss of disintegration, hyperinflation and the rise of the major-generals, with all the dangers that that implies, as well as the growth, possibly, of new nuclear powers; I mean also in the new democracies, about which we talk so happily—we assume that they have got rid of their

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Communist nomenclatura or, rather, that such people have gone into the background, changed and become capitalists—which are swimming from being closed societies to open societies. They will not—at least not without the most enormous help and attention of western Europe.

Those countries, which the previous generation fought the second world war to make free—an objective that was denied us in the moment of victory—now have the opportunity to reach the democratic shore from the shore of a closed tyranny. We seem to think that they will get there by themselves while we busy ourselves with the details of the Dutch draft treaty and other matters. That is not so. There is a great arc of instability right across southern and central Europe. Self-determination is running riot. Tiny groups and nationalities, albeit with splendid aspirations, are pitching their ambitions and expectations far too high. These are real threats to the comfortable, cosy, stability of western Europe and its separate nations. We drift at our peril into the pathetic view of the 1930s, that these are faraway countries of which we need know nothing.

In considering the issues at Maastricht, I ask the House at least to keep in mind that Europe may have greater priorities than those of resolving every detail of European political and monetary union at Maastricht. Nevertheless, those are the practical requirements on the table and we must address ourselves to them in this debate. I shall add my twopenceworth in the short time available.

I shall deal briefly with the monetary union problems and then at greater length with political union, about which we face serious and fundamental difficulties. I can deal more swiftly with European monetary union because, from listening to some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, it is difficult to know what all the fuss is about. There will never be a single currency excluding all other currencies from Lisbon to Berlin, from Reggio Calabria to Glasgow. Nor would it make practical sense to attempt a monster bank, running a single pattern of short-term interest rates, not for 340 million people, but for 400 million or 420 million people as there will be then. The area it would cover might even run into the Ukraine—who knows? Such a development will not occur.

We will, however, have a common currency. The ecu will be widely used throughout Europe for international trade transactions, and even for paying salaries. It may be used by the Russians to replace their collapsing rouble —who knows? We want to be closely concerned with the monetary developments that lead up to it. I cannot agree with some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and others who say that we should veto the whole thing. The Prime Minister is right in saying that we have to be involved in these enormous monetary developments: the hardened ecu, the frozen basket ecu, or whatever, are coming.

We need have no fears about the single currency idea. It will not happen, so we need not be involved in it. The concerns of some Members on that subject are exaggerated. That is not so with regard to political union. On that, I have a different stance. Here we seem to have deep difficulties. It is often said that with great treaties the devil is in the detail, but in this case that is not so. In this case the devil is not in the detail but in the principle. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, the devil is right there in the preamble, in the opening words. That is why we find the issue so difficult.

We have not come to a natural resting point in the unfolding progress towards a united states of Europe. We have come to a Y fork in the road. We have built the single market. Contrary to the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), Britain led the way there, as a pioneer, but now we have come to the point where there are fundamentally different views about which way Europe should go.

Should it go towards a united states of Europe, with a strong congress at the centre and a strong executive, or should we stick to the confederal view? Do we believe the doctrine of "acquis communautaire", which means that there will be an inevitable progress towards the Community institutions growing more powerful—a one-way ratchet to greater power at the centre—or do we accept that a great confederation of nation states, with the nations delegating power to central Community institutions for specific tasks, is the right way forward? That is a fundamental divide. We are all required to stand up and be counted, to say which way we should go.

Those who would like to see a united states of Europe call in aid the founding fathers—Jean Monnet, Walter Hallstein and such people. We are told that they were all in favour of a united states of Europe, that it is all a great process, and that only spoilsports and isolationists are against it. That is not so. Jean Monnet believed that the Community should not arrogate to itself the airs and graces of a nation state; it should not try to rival the nation states. Jean Monnet and Hallstein warned against the fancy and cavalier use of the word "federal", because they knew the difficulties that it would cause.

I share the concerns of those who talk about the drift to the centre—the awful centralism which belongs to the 19th rather than the 21st century. I share the views of those who say that political reform is needed. We need a political treaty, but it should circumscribe, limit and identify the central powers of the central Community institutions, as James Madison and others wanted in the original United States of America. But that was taken away by Abraham Lincoln and by the civil war.

The sort of subsidiarity that we want delegates functions to the centre from the nation states. There may be a wider range of functions. There may be new functions, and perhaps we should take away some of the old ones. If more environmental functions are to be handled by the Community institutions, perhaps we should consider repatriating some of the functions connected with agriculture and the rural economy—the Community has not made too good a fist of those.

Let us look at the idea in terms of limited power at the centre, to be reviewed and revised from time to time in the proper confederal spirit.

Over the past decade, we led the process of building the internal market. We have been the most assiduous in accepting the regulations and directives. In Brussels, we were the most forceful on all the committees in pressing for the internal market. We pushed ahead with what we saw as the kind of Europe that we wanted—the great open market, accessible to the new nations, the EFTA nations, the new democracies, as soon as possible. That was our ideal and our dream. It remains a fine dream, and a

tremendous vision of Europe. It is not the same as the vision of the centralists, of those who want to build up a stronger executive at the centre and a stronger Parliament.

When I say that the devil is not in the detail, that is what I mean. We can argue about the little movements one way or the other, but the spirit in which we do so, the broad approach and the principle on which we go to Maastricht will determine whether we have a Europe that is free and good—the kind of Europe for which we fought—or a Europe that is centralised, old-fashioned, paralysed, and inward-looking and that will ultimately betray itself.

8.36 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I suppose that this has been a great parliamentary occasion, but I find it extremely disappointing and in a sense unreal. There has been hardly any mention yet from either side of the House of the economic consequences of our failing to be in Europe looking after the interests of British industry, especially manufacturing industry. With great respect to all the complexities of the political points that have been made, I was brought up to believe that political progress and economic prosperity had to go hand in hand, and that concept has been missing from the debate. Too many Aunt Sallies have been raised, not least by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who made a magnificent speech—magnificient in its humour but also in its irrelevance. We have got to get back to earth.

The Prime Minister gave us a disappointing start. There was no vision at all in his speech. I was tempted to quote my favourite text from the Bible:

"Where there is no vision the people perish."

If that is the sort of leadership that we shall have in Europe, the people will perish.

The right hon. Member for Finchley gave an extraordinary speech. It was a charade, a caricature of herself. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) raised that great Aunt Sally that we could not have entered the Gulf war had we been totally in Europe. I was under the impression that the Gulf war was authorised by the United Nations, and that France and Italy sent forces to support the enterprise. So why was that ridiculous Aunt Sally suggested?

As the chairman of the Labour Movement for Europe, I find the most galling event of the debate the fact that the Foreign Secretary intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to say that, if my right hon. Friend had had his way, we would not have been in Europe in the first place. May I remind the Foreign Secretary that, had it not been for 69 of my right hon. and hon. Friends who voted for the then Government despite a three-line Whip, the Government would not have been in Europe either?

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): How did the right hon. Gentleman vote on Second Reading of the European Communities Act?

Mr. Howell: I am sorry, but I did not catch what the right hon. Gentleman said, and as I have only 10 minutes, I hope that he will excuse me.

There are many fundamental questions of great importance that we are not tackling. Are we in Europe or are we not? According to most of the hon. Members who have spoken today, either we are not in Europe or we should not be in Europe—and that includes Members who will vote for the Government motion. Those are ludicrous propositions. Did we sign the Single European Act or did we not? Did the former Prime Minister know what she was doing?

Another question that arises from the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield concerns the European Parliament. Are we saying that the electors, to whom we pay such lip service because they vote for us to come here, are removed to another planet when they vote for Members of the European Parliament? That is an extraordinary proposition. That is why I believe that the European Parliament will be given more powers.

I am worried about the situation in Europe. British industry—I have consulted the CBI, the engineering employers and the Birmingham chamber of commerce—knows perfectly well that our industrial future has to lie in one of the great trading blocs of the world—with the United States, with Japan, or with the European monetary system. Now 52 per cent. of our exports go to Europe. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield may want to change things, but despite all the criticisms that have been made, no one has said where we will be economically if we do not play our full part in Europe and sign the treaty. That question has been knocked all around the Chamber and we must answer it.

The West Midlands Engineering Employers Association put it in a nutshell when it said:

"We cannot hope to influence the future of Europe if we keep saying no or standing on the touchline. We must get involved in the game."

The social charter is the real reason for all the hesitation and doubts expressed by Conservative Members. That charter will compel the Government to accord to British people the same rights as those that will be enjoyed by the people of Europe and which the Christian Democrats—they have turned out to be even more left-wing than the Social Democrats—the traditional friends of the Conservative party, want to implement.

The attitude adopted by the Secretary of State for Employment is nauseating. He is nauseating on the subject of the minimum wage, the limit on hours to be worked, maternity leave and pensions.

Mr. Tony Banks: He is just nauseating.

Mr. Denis Howell: Yes, that is true.

What impression does the Secretary of State for Employment create in Europe as he argues passionately that British employers cannot afford to give 14 weeks maternity leave to women working in British industry? He argues that British industry will collapse if it has to give more than 12 weeks maternity leave. If that is the state of British industry, perhaps it is time that we came out of Europe. All the right hon. and learned Gentleman is doing is promoting a sweat-shop, poverty-ridden economy for our country. His attitude is a disgrace.

The Community is right to say that we should not work more than 48 hours, but the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Employment are seeking to defend sweat-shop conditions. I have been president of a trade association for many years, and I know that excessive hours of overtime, when constantly worked, are a great evil. However, the Government are seeking to defend them.

We are told that we cannot have a minimum wage because that would destroy our industry and the economy. France, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal and Luxembourg have such a minimum wage, as does the

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United States. Belgium, Greece, Denmark, Italy and Germany have created an acceptable minimum wage through negotiation. What on earth does British industry mean when it says that it cannot afford to pay, for example, £3·40 an hour? That is the sum recommended by my union, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. Its recommendation met with the overwhelming support of our people according to a recent MORI poll. We can be efficient in industry and at the same time afford to pay wages above the poverty line.

What about the scandal of pensions? I have no doubt that the European Commission and the dreaded Jacques Delors will soon say that the pensions paid in this country are a disgrace. Our pensioners are being cheated every week by the Government's decision to break the link between pensions and earnings. As a result, a single pensioner is cheated out of £17·65 a week and a married couple are cheated out of £27. The Conservative party may be proud of that, but I am sure that, in future, the Commission and the European Parliament will ensure that the link between pensions and earnings is hallowed in the United Kingdom. After all, that link has been kept in most other European countries.

The scandal about our pensions is another reason why the Government do not want to embrace the social charter, but that should be the reason for giving it overwhelming support. It is another reason why we should sign the treaty, which is in the economic interests of our manufacturing community. It will create jobs, not lose them. We should support the social charter, because it will bring social justice to the ordinary people of Britain.

8.44 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), I am a member of the youngest age group in the House. Like my hon. Friend, I want to concentrate on the future rather than the past 20 years. The arguments that were current in 1973 about our membership of the Community have been rehearsed over and over again today in the same vein.

The important thing that we must do is look ahead 20 years to the time when those of us who are, I hope, still active in politics will be asked difficult questions. We will be asked why the House diverted its attention towards those sceptics who persuaded us to shy away from an agreement at Maastricht. We will be asked why we did not see the importance of the emerging European bloc on our doorstep. We will be asked why, given the evidence of the time, when EFTA and the east European countries were queueing up to join the tighter Community that was being proposed, we allowed ourselves to be left outside.

People will ask why, given the importance of the single market to our high-volume, low-cost producers and the importance of our country—as a member of the Community—to the companies of the United States and Japan who have invested so heavily with us, we did not grab with both hands the opportunities that the Maastricht summit offered to fashion the Community to our advantage in the future.

Surely people will ask us why, in 1991, we did not recognise young people's aspirations to travel and work abroad. They will want to know why we did not appreciate the inconvenience and stupidity of having to change currency constantly as one moved from country to country in the Community. Given the history of European developments in the past 20 years, those people will also want to know why we did not learn from Britain's earlier mistake. They will want to know why we did not join the Community at its inception and fashion the very fabric of it to our advantage. We now have the opportunity to do that.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that other countries are offering to help us to use their sovereignty in a way that will benefit us in the future. It is no coincidence or mistake that it was the Conservative party that applied to take Britain into the Community, and which took Britain in. It is no coincidence that it was a Conservative Government under my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) who signed the Single European Act and joined the exchange rate mechanism. It is not a mistake that all that happened as a result of Conservative policy, because the Conservative party has consistently been dedicated to raising the living standards and the material prosperity of our people. That is why we have consistently adopted a pro-European stance.

We are following the commitment that we gave in 1973 to ever closer union, so why are we now beginning to get cold feet? Surely the House appreciates that some problems go beyond national frontiers, particularly those affecting pollution and international trade. Our ability to negotiate a better deal for our people can only be strengthened by ever greater co-operation with other countries. Young people look forward to co-operation, and aspire to building something good for the future. They are not looking back at what happened in the past.

A question that has still not been answered at any point during the debate was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden): what happens if the other countries go ahead without us? No one has given a satisfactory answer to that. We have heard some fine arguments about sovereignty, but sovereignty falls into two categories. First, there is legal sovereignty—the legal right to do as we please. Secondly, there is real sovereignty —the real ability to do as we wish. That is what the argument is really about.

I hope that this debate will be about the valuable contribution that Britain can make to the European community, rather than a sterile argument about whether the king's prerogatives will be taken over by the Government and given away in the face of the people. Britain has one last chance to ensure that it is part of the considerations in the emerging power block. It has a chance to influence that power bloc, democratise its institutions, correct the many faults in the present European community institutions, bring the new financial centre to London, and ensure that the bloc is a benign institution, shouldering world problems and finding aid and defence solutions to them.

The biggest mistake that we have made so far is the one that critics of the European Community so often turn against us—the fact that we were absent when the common agricultural policy was established. For all those who sit on European committees, the CAP is the main criticism that we have of the Community's work. The way in which some of the subsidies work is ludicrous, but had we been there at the beginning, we might have been able to reform

it so that it could work to our advantage. It is interesting that Britain and Denmark—the two most recent members—have been in the forefront of its reform.

Under the Administration of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, Britain regained her pre-eminence in world affairs. However, we have a long and enduring experience of wider responsibility in the world. We have taken on UN commitments to Kuwait and initiated efforts on behalf of the Kurds. Even now, a former Member of this House leads the European peace efforts in Yugoslavia, a conflict into which the European Community has been drawn because of its geographical position and economic strength. As yet, it does not have the power to solve it.

In the 1990s, we approach a new world in which the old cold war of the two super-powers has given way to three emerging super-power economic blocs: North America, South-East Asia and Europe. Some issues can be tackled only at a European level. They include the control of inflation and the provision of sound economies, because we have such interrelated and interacting economies. They also include the control of environmental pollution, and we could benefit greatly through co-operating further on defence and foreign policy.

Britain could have much more clout with the combined power of our neighbours than as an individual country. I believe that the British people look forward to greater development within the Community because they want the material benefits that that may bring. Naturally, they are worried that the Queen's head may disappear from our currency, but if we had economic and monetary union, as we have with Scotland, nothing would stop us providing different notes, even with a different name, provided that they had fixed values that were easily exchangeable.

Although people are concerned about the democratic deficit, their biggest worry is that they will not have the power to remove unelected bureaucrats in Europe. Therefore, they need the democratic powers and the rights of the European Parliament to be developed to ensure that those who are elected can be called to account.

I do not approach this question thinking only about how we shall hand ancient privileges over to foreigners. Like many people who promote the European Community in this country, I promote it because I see enormous financial, economic and environmental advantages for our country. It is essential, therefore, that the Prime Minister should sign an agreement in Maastricht. I strongly urge him to do so, if he can reach a sensible and reasonable compromise. I do not for one minute believe that we shall hand over everything that this country has ever stood for in terms of its independence. Rather, I see the process as continuing way into the future—a process in which Britain must play a leading and important part.

8.57 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): As a good European, I attended a conference of Anglo-German parliamentarians earlier this year in Germany. A British Conservative MP—a great Euro-enthusiast—addressed the conference on what he called "the British problem". He explained the British problem to the Germans by saying that the British people had been lied to—they had not been told the truth about what used to be called the Common Market and is now called the European Community. He said that there was no full-hearted consent originally and that the 1972 White Paper presented by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) explained that essential sovereignty would not be eroded. He said that in 1975 we had a referendum in which it was suggested that it was an economic and trade rather than a political matter.

He referred to the fact that the Government of the day distributed a manifesto to every household in the land. It said, first, that no decision could be taken in Brussels without the consent of a British Minister who would be answerable to the British Parliament—in other words, no political union. Secondly, it said that there had been a threat of economic and monetary union which threatened to bring unemployment, but that that had been removed and therefore people could vote in the referendum knowing that there would be no economic or monetary union.

It was suggested sotto voce that that could be a matter for our grandchildren. It is not a matter for our grandchildren or even our children, but it is to be decided in a fortnight's time. We are now told that, having been lied to over the years, the British people now have the prospect of political union, and they react against it and shy away. That is because they were told that it would not happen. A Conservative Member explained to our German colleagues that that was the reason for the "British problem".

At each stage of the story, Britain has been the odd man out. Why is it always the odd man out? It is because our system is one of parliamentary self-government, which is incompatible with the European Community system. We have been asked to give that up and to go over to the European Community system, with the European Court and majority voting—the shoe is pinching all the time. The Commission make us do things that we do not want to do and stops us doing what we want to.

Our former colleague, Sir Leon Brittan, is a far more powerful man now than when he was a Cabinet Minister and now tells us what we can do with Rover. Value added tax has been put on spectacles and surgical boots, which we would never have dreamed of doing. I heard it being suggested to the Minister that we should reduce value added tax in relation to the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. She said that the European Community would not allow us to do so. The Community even tells us through which fields we are to put our roads. All that is resented by Parliament and our people.

The current proposition is that we should go further. As Mr. Delors explained—my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and others will be interested in this—the suggestion is that 80 per cent. of our economic, social and political affairs should be decided in Brussels. Who wants that? [HON. MEMBERS: "We do."] Who wants that apart from a few wildly unrepresentative fanatics? The British people do not want it.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): How does my hon. Friend know that?

Mr. Leighton: The public opinion polls showed that three quarters of the British people do not want it.

We have had discussion about the word "federal". I know it is a word that can mean various things, but we must ask why some continental politicians refer to the word "federal" at every opportunity. It is because they want a super-state. The British people have not been told

[Mr. Leighton]

the truth about that. Some people say that "federalism" means devolving power downwards to the people, which sounds good. They are trying to kid us again.

To use the jargon, federalism means extending the competence of the Euro-institutions to defence, foreign, immigration and asylum, social, and economic policies —the bread and butter issues of our politics are to be removed from this Parliament and transferred to Brussels. The power is not being devolved downwards, but up to the centre. That is the truth which the people of this country must face. If that is what one or two of my extremist fanatical friends and the people of this country want, so be it, but, that will destroy our democracy.

How does one define a democracy? The more I think about it, the more I believe that it is a political unit in which the minority accept the verdict. If the Conservative party wins a general election, I am upset and I don't like it, but I am willing to accept the result because I accept the verdict of the people. I think to myself that I can serve in opposition, make my case and perhaps win the next election, so I accept the result. However, if decisions are to be made in Brussels by alien institutions whose representatives are not elected by us and by people who we cannot remove, and those decisions damage my constituents, am I supposed to accept that? I do not think that we shall.

With my colleague, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), in mind, I say that such a process will break up the United Kingdom. If the decisions are all to be made in Brussels, why should the Scots send Members of Parliament to Westminster? It would be a waste of their time to come down here, because the decisions will not be taken here, but in Brussels. The process constitutes a national threat because it will break up the United Kingdom.

Economic matters including interest and exchange rates, monetary and fiscal policy, budgetary policy, are all at the heart of Government and all are to be decided by a central bank, which will be the most important institution. The treaty states that Governments will undertake not to seek to influence the central bank. It states that they will even undertake not to influence their national central banks, which means rule by bankers. I did not become a Labour Member of Parliament to hand over all power to bankers. Clem Attlee nationalised the Bank of England because he did not think that we should have rule by central bankers.

The other idea is that we should have a single currency. If there is a single currency and economies get out of line, they cannot be adjusted by movements of the exchange rate, which is the normal way—so what happens? Countries will become blighted and depressed regions, with mass unemployment. I did not become a Labour Member of Parliament or the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment to work for policies that would lead to chronic mass unemployment. Why should we agree to anything of that sort?

If we have a Labour Government after the next general election—obviously that is the result that I want—they will need the tools to do the job. That Administration will need to control interest rates, exchange rates and budgetary policy. If we go along with the present approach we shall have unilateral economic disarmament and many crucial matters will be decided elsewhere. If so, what is the point of having this Parliament? What is the point of having the Labour party? What is the point of having elections? These matters—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who is making expansive gestures, may be in favour of the consequences that I have described, but I do not think that the British people share her view.

All the evidence is that the British people think that we have handed over enough power to Brussels already. The British people do not want new treaties that will hand over the power that remains. It would be dangerous to foist upon the British people that which is being proposed, and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South has no right to do so. None of us has a mandate to abandon the powers of Parliament, which are the powers of the people. We are the custodians of the rights and powers of the people, and we must hand them on to our successors.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: No. I do not have time to give way.

I resent the bullying to which we are subjected. We are told, "We are forced to have this whether we want it or not." There is all this talk about a train—"The train is going, we don't know where it is going to, but we must get on. If we do not board it, we shall be punished. There is no choice. We can't use our intelligence or our free will. If we do that, we shall be punished."

How will we be punished? At present, we pay into the budget £2·4 billion more than we obtain from it. Will we be told, "We won't accept your contributions to the budget"? Is that being suggested? A huge trade deficit has been foisted upon us, so will we be told, "We won't trade with you. We won't let you buy our goods"? Under the common agricultural policy, we have to pay higher prices for our food. Will we be told, "We won't let you buy our food"?

We have the right and the power to make our own choices and to act on our own free will. We must have, of course, the closest possible relations with the other European countries, but these must be based on a different model. We want an association of self-governing countries who co-operate for the common good. We now have the chance to bring in the countries of Eastern Europe, but our response to the collapse of communism has been completely inadequate. We have been presented with a great opportunity but we shall not be able to take advantage of it by means of economic and monetary union.

The House will be aware of what the deutschmark did in East Germany, as it then was. Is it thought that Romania and Bulgaria will be able to enter the European Community on that basis? We are keeping the countries of eastern Europe out of the EC by removing the political barrier and erecting an economic barrier.

I agree with those who have said that we do not have the power to embark on such a huge constitutional change without consulting the people. The rights of Parliament are the rights of the people, and the people must be consulted. That process having taken place, the people must decide. If all the parties are split, if even the Campaign Group in the Labour party is split, how are the people to be consulted? There is only one way to do that,

and that is by means of a plebiscite. By that means we shall be able to put the issue before the British people and let them decide.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House that there are many who wish to speak in the debate today and tomorrow. The Chair can no longer impose a limit of 10 minutes on speeches, but I hope that those who are called to speak will feel that it is appropriate to volunteer no more than 10 minutes in their speeches.

9.8 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), because I agree with virtually every single word that he has just said. This is probably the first time that that has happened but, if the debate continues long enough, and I think that it will go on for some time yet, it will certainly not be the last. Like the hon. Gentleman, I believe that Britain now stands at a crossroads. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that we are now at the Rubicon, and I believe that we are.

For a long time now I have been labouring under the delusion that the EC is about free trade. I voted yes.

Mr. Devlin *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Favell: My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) shakes his head. He probably rumbled long ago that the EC is not just about free trade and that it is what it is now apparently about—setting up a federal state. I am glad that today's debate has taken the wraps off so that we can all see what the EC is set for.

As Chancellor Kohl said throughout last year, the EC is about creating a united states of Europe. He has said all along that Germany wants the political unification of Europe and that for him German reunification and European unity are two sides of the same coin.

Until recently, even the leaders in *The Times* said that surely the Germans, French, Spanish, Italians, Danes, Dutch and so on would not give up their independence; surely they are not prepared to turn themselves into some kind of European super-state. But now it is clear for all to see. Mr. Delors has said so today.

This is a federal treaty. Mr. Delors seems to tell my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, just as he did my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who made a marvellous speech today, that what he says goes. In fact, he rejoiced when my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley went, because she failed to recognise that the EC was all about the setting up of a federal state. He made no secret of it. Soon after my right hon. Friend went, Mr. Delors said that our present Prime Minister had better be careful or the rug might be pulled from under him. It is clear for all to see.

I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, North-East that this ultimate step should not be made without the wholehearted consent of the British people. That is a phrase that we have heard before, but this time it refers to the wholehearted consent of the British people to Britain no longer being a self-governing country as we understand it. Majority voting on foreign affairs, security, immigration, health, education, culture leading to a single federal state. After 900 years of independent history, that step should not and cannot be made without the wholehearted consent expressed by plebiscite of the British people.

Because I have made no secret of the fact that I am in favour of a referendum—indeed, I have pushed for it—some have suggested that I do not have faith in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There is no better man to negotiate. I do not expect the hon. Member for Newham, North-East to agree, but there is no better man than he to negotiate. But much as I like, respect and admire him, I do not believe that one man should decide the nation's fate forever. That is what will happen if Conservative Members say that we trust the Prime Minister to sign or not sign as he decides when he goes to Maastricht, on 9 and 10 December. Not even Henry VIII would have made such a decision without the people behind him. That is why there must be a referendum.

When the Prime Minister returns from Maastricht, he must put the package to the people and let the people decide. That is what the Danes intend to do and that has taken the heat out of the argument there. The Danish people will have that right. There is no earthly reason why the British people also should not have it. I believe that the British people would say no. The people who are most vehemently opposed to a referendum are those federalists who fear that the British people would say no. They fear the answer. I do not fear the answer—and even if the British people said yes, I would abide by their decision. At least they will have been asked first.

It is our duty to do that. We have no mandate to give away the government of this country to others. Some people may have rumbled some years ago what the Community was about, but I did not. I know now, but many people outside the House did not know either. I believe that there should be a referendum. We have been failing the people who elected us, we have no mandate to give away the government of this country, and I will now give other right hon. and hon. Members an opportunity to speak.

9.15 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I believe that I am the first Scot to be called to speak this evening, and I hope that my remarks will give a Scottish perspective to the debate, much of which has proceeded on a false premise. That was particularly so of the remarks by my right hon. Friends the Members for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I admired the fluency and power of their speeches, but their basic assumptions were wrong. In so far as they and other right hon. and hon. Members defended the notion of national sovereignty and the powers and privileges of our national Parliament, they defended something that does not exist.

I refer not to the powers and privileges that, as other hon. Members pointed out, have constantly been eroded —which makes a good argument for trying to recover some of that real power by mixing our sovereignty with other countries. I refer to the non-fact of a national Parliament. This House is not a national Parliament but a multinational Parliament. It is the Parliament of our United Kingdom, representing nation states that were previously independent and sovereign, and which enjoyed self-government but relinquished it.

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

If the arguments in defence of a British Parliament made by my right hon. Friends the Members for Bethnal Green and Stepney and for Chesterfield had been heard by the members of the Scottish Parliament that existed in 1707, this British Parliament would never have come into existence. In that sense, my right hon. Friends' arguments were self-defeating. If one pursues the notion of national sovereignty, which advocates self-government, that is an argument for the break-up of Britain, not by mixing the present British Parliament into a higher federal union, but by breaking it up into the separate components of Great Britain.

It is ironic that those in Britain and in the House who are fighting a desperate rearguard action against the European Community fail to recognise European union as the logical successor of, and the greatest possible compliment to, the success of the British union—which can serve as the model for the European union of the future.

I am a unionist in both the British and the European sense, because in principle I favour the establishment of the broadest possible political community. I believe also in the principle of subsidiarity, not just within a new united Europe but within the existing United Kingdom as well. I find it odd that Conservative Members who advocate the principle of subsidiarity in Europe deny it within the United Kingdom, when they deny the possibility of devolution to Scotland.

There is no conflict between the principles of unionism and of subsidiarity. They are the two sides of the same federalist coin, and are entirely consistent. What is inconsistent and illogical is the curious muddle into which some hon. Members have got themselves in the course of tonight's debate.

As I have said, some Conservative defenders of subsidiarity advocate political devolution in Europe while denying it in the United Kingdom. The Scottish National party—its members have yet to speak tonight, but no doubt we shall hear from them—support separatism and sovereign independence from the English, but favour ever closer union with the Germans and the French, thus reducing their philosophy to simple anti-English prejudice. That is an illogical position, born of political opportunism.

Two lessons can be learned from the union of Great Britain if, as I suggest, we take that union as the logical and historical precedent for European union. The first is that there is no risk whatever of a loss of national identity, other than the loss of identity that follows naturally from the greater influence of commerce and trade within the Community. That bogey is dragged out time and time again.

Even after 300 years of political, economic and monetary union, it is still easier to distinguish an Englishman from a Scotsman—on the basis of accent, name or even manner—than it is to distinguish a Serb from a Croat. That is despite the fact that the union of Great Britain is much more rigid and centralised than the proposed European union. In the British union, differences have not only survived but flourished, and I believe that, in a European union, national differences would flourish to the same extent.

The second lesson is that we should not replicate the centralised nature of the British union. The EC is now rightly moving towards a different model—a federal structure that would allow the institutions of the centre to deal with responsibilities that are rightly drawn into the centre. I refer to such macro-issues as monetary policy, environmental policy, trade and, ultimately, foreign affairs and defence.

It showed either inconsistency or a simple failure to understand the case for the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) to advocate the notion of a common foreign policy, while opposing the idea of institutions that would make such a policy effective. That is a recipe for the muddle against which so many people have warned us. If we are to avoid the muddle of the Gulf war and the contentions of the Yugoslav crisis, we must develop institutions that will allow us to overcome such differences.

Those who pretend that we are not moving towards a framework that will allow the Community to counter common decisions on foreign and defence policy are living in a dream world. Even after 1992—quite apart from the treaties that we are discussing—the single market and European competition policies will impose pressures for national Governments to achieve greater convergence on defence procurement. Once that happens, pressures will be imposed for them to reach greater convergence on defence policy in general.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacDonald: I cannot do so if I am to abide by the 10-minute recommendation.

Those, then, are the macro-issues that should be left at the centre. At national and regional level, we can deal with domestic issues such as schools, health care, social services and local transport. Striking such a balance will avoid the constitutional stresses and strains that in recent years have afflicted the United Kingdom in particular. The treaties will embody that federalist approach—for that, in principle, is what it is, even if the word itself cannot be used because of the childish objections of British negotiators.

The treaties will begin the necessary task of making Community structures at the centre more directly accountable to European citizens, by extending and strengthening the powers of the European Parliament. That is extremely important. Eventually, this process will rightly lead to the Commission becoming more directly accountable to the electorates across Europe, not just indirectly accountable, as it is now, to the European Parliament and the European Council.

By extending the competence of the British union, in line with that federalist principle of subsidiarity and by making the union more democratic and accountable to its citizens, the European Community can begin to forge a union that will, in time, be as great a success as the British union has been.

In forging that union, Europe has a particularly great advantage, in that no country can dominate that union in the way that England has inevitably dominated the United Kingdom, or Russia has inevitably dominated the Soviet Union. That is the answer to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield. He raised the fear that union would lead to a rise of resentment, and thus to nationalism. The European union can be a genuine partnership of equals. It is one to which Britain must

belong if it is to secure prosperity and influence in the future and also if it is to be true to its own multinational unionist past.

9.26 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I greatly welcome the motion in the name of the Prime Minister and his right hon. Friends. I shall support it when it comes to the vote. I very much welcome also the opening paragraphs of my right hon. Friend's speech, in which he made it absolutely clear that he, together with the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would do their utmost to seek a negotiated settlement on this issue that was the best possible deal available. I do not believe that we could have a better team to try to achieve that deal.

My right hon. Friend went on to say that if, none the less, he felt that that deal was not satisfactory, either from the point of view of the United Kingdom or from the point of view of the Community as a whole, he would not go ahead and sign it. I think that we can have confidence that that will be so, although each of us will also have to decide whether we think that the best deal that has been negotiated is acceptable to us.

I very much hope that that deal will be one where we do not have to go for the so-called opt-in/opt-out clause. If we go down that route, we shall not only not have a full role in the further negotiations but, under the draft treaty as it stands, we shall be specifically precluded from participating in a number of important decisions. That opt-in/opt-out clause is very limited in its scope. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will be successful in negotiating an arrangement that is acceptable without the use of that clause.

As for the referendum—or, I should say, referendums, because the plural of "referendum" is "referendums", not "referenda"—let me say very clearly that I am totally opposed to referendums in any shape or form. I believe profoundly, as the Prime Minister has made absolutely clear, that this is a representative parliamentary democracy. We are not here, in Edmund Burke's words, as delegates. If one has a referendum, there is a danger that one comes here as a delegate. If there is one thing that is absolutely clear, it is that this issue is of immense complexity and least of all suitable for a referendum.

I pointed out in the debate on the Queen's Speech that if one asked one's constituents, "What is the difference between a common currency and a single currency?", they would be unable to say, yet that is a crucial distinction. I issued a press release to that effect. The chief reporter on my local paper asked me whether I could tell her the difference between a common currency and a single currency, which seemed to me to make the point. We are responsible for considering these complex issues and making the decision on behalf of our constituents.

I have not been able to obtain the edition of Dicey referring to a referendum from which my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was quoting, but if it is argued that, if all political parties take the same view of a particular issue, the electorate do not have a choice and a referendum should be held, a rather difficult technical problem arises. What happens as a result of a referendum? Will all the political parties say, "We shall accept the referendum and not what all of us believe"? I understand from Dicey that a referendum would not constitutionally bind the following Government, so such a referendum is not the escape route that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley suggested. It is our responsibility, as representatives of our constituents, to make a decision on this matter.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I agree with all the arguments that the right hon. Gentleman has advanced. He quoted the Prime Minister in aid of his argument. Is he as surprised as I was to learn that No. 10 Downing street has been briefing the press to the effect that the Prime Minister has not ruled out the possibility of a referendum in some future Parliament?

Mr. Higgins: I cannot comment on No. 10 briefings. I am clear about what my hon. Friend the Prime Minister said today, at Question Time yesterday and in the leadership campaign a year ago. Like me, he believes in representative parliamentary democracy and is against referendums. I have no doubt whatsoever about that.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) sought to say that the electorate have lost faith in democracy. It is not the electorate who have lost faith in democracy but people such as the right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members who feel they have to resort to a referendum rather than carry out their true duty.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Higgins: I cannot. I wish to stick to the timetable, because I believe that Privy Councillors should seek to do so.

The draft treaty contains dates for the achievement of a single currency, but the crucial aspect is whether the necessary convergence has been achieved before that takes place. I have not time, I fear, to go into detail on the issue of a single currency, but it is absolutely clear that a single currency is not a reason why one should opt for the control of fiscal deficits and seek to undermine the fundamental control of money, taxation and public expenditure, which has been the basis of our power since the time of Simon de Montfort. It is important to stress that a single currency does not require the control of deficits.

I shall not go into detail on article 104B, although it is fundamental to the issue. The editor of *The Times* has been more than generous in allowing me to advance my views on that point. However, I want to deal with a point that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made this afternoon. The wording of paragraph (1) of article 104B is crucial. It says:

"Member States shall avoid excessive Government deficits."

The protocol explains what that means and other paragraphs state that the decision on whether a deficit is excessive shall be determined by the Commission in carrying out an investigation and then by the Council of Ministers.

The impression has got around—for example, in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley—that this is somehow only a question of surveillance. That is not true. The article says quite clearly:

"Member States shall avoid excessive Government deficits."

I therefore very much welcome the statement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that that paragraph must be amended, because I have no doubt that we shall be entering into a binding agreement if we sign the treaty as drafted.

[Mr. Higgins]

The fact that article 104B contains a paragraph which states not only that the penalties specified do not apply in stage 2, but that the existing sanctions in the treaty as a whole will not apply in stage 2, leads to the bizarre situation where one part of the article states clearly, "You shall not do it," but provision is made in other parts of the article to make that unenforceable. We should not doubt that, if we signed the treaty as drafted, article 104B would be binding and we would have agreed not to have an "excessive deficit". That strikes at the basis of control over public expenditure.

We are short of time and I am anxious to keep within the limit, so I shall deal with the crucial distinction between an agreement being binding and being enforceable. It is clear that when our Parliament signs an agreement in the European Community we abide by it. We have a better record than any other country of implementing what we have signed. I am becoming very concerned about the way in which that works in practice, because it is apparent that other countries in the Community have a different philosophy. Often they do not implement the proposals in the intended manner.

The Confederation of British Industry has recently criticised the Department of Trade and Industry. I am worried about the way in which that Department, for example, is implementing proposals imposed on us by the Community, although they are not being implemented in other countries. This is to our competitive disadvantage. It is tremendously important that when we implement such proposals the timing of the implementation should be related to that of the other countries in the Community. At present, the Department of Trade and Industry is too concerned with regulation and not enough with protecting our interests.

It is very important that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should now negotiate as toughly as possible. I believe that he will achieve the best possible deal but, having done that, he and we must consider whether we can accept it. I have not the slightest doubt that we as representatives of our constituents must take the decision in this House. To try to pass off the responsibility in the form of a referendum is wholly abhorrent to me and, I hope, to the House as a whole.

9.37 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli) *rose*——

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You had been in the Chair for only a few seconds when an Opposition spokesman made an important intervention. He made the rather surprising announcement that No. 10 Downing street had tonight given a briefing to the effect that a referendum had not been ruled out and, therefore, I suppose, might be ruled in. That is relevant to the debate and to the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), myself and other hon. Friends.

If that announcement is correct, we should be told, because it has an important bearing on our proceedings. We have here no lesser personages than the Minister of State, Treasury and the Foreign Secretary's Parliamentary Private Secretary. The announcement might be merely one of the late night fantasies to which the the Opposition are prone, but we need to know whether such an announcement—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Let us hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Aitken: I seek your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, before the proceedings continue. Can we have a statement from the Government to clarify what has or has not been said?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House has heard what the hon. Gentleman has to say. Since I was a mini Back Bencher, I have always believed that any announcement of such a nature should be made first to this House. Those on the Government Front Bench have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said and what the Chair has had to say. I hope that they have taken that message to heart.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is now using very valuable time. There can be no further points of order. I have made the Chair's position quite clear.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I take it that my voluntary 10 minutes runs from now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The amendments to the treaty of Rome on economic and monetary union, which mean a single currency and an unelected European central bank, go to the heart of our parliamentary democracy, as others have said. The amendments add up to a substantial transfer of control over money from a democratically elected Government and Parliament to an unelected committee of European bankers. When the spirit of the age and the spirit of Europe are for more democracy, better democracy and deeper democracy, the Government have been asked—indeed, encouraged by some—to act completely contrary to that spirit of the age.

I find it perplexing that so many groups in Britain today demand—rightly—better British democracy and criticise our democracy, yet many of those people are prepared to acquiesce in the transfer of power which will diminish the British democracy that they apparently want to enhance and improve. It seems that peoples and parliaments are not to be trusted with money; money has to be taken out of the democratic process and out of the democratic powers.

Over the ages, the European elite have often sought to entrench certain principles and rights in fundamental documents and fundamental laws. They do that basically to keep those rights and principles away from the people. Medieval theologians sought to make all human law conform to the higher law—the higher jus naturale. The divine right of kings was apparently not to be challenged by Parliaments or by people. Even Lenin, if one can call him a member of the European elite, tried to entrench the dictatorship of the proletariat and to put it out of reach of democracy and of popular control. I am told that some sections of the loony right in the United States even speak about something called the "law of the marketplace". Even that is now a kind of law to which all other laws must conform.

At least the medieval theologians sought to entrench rather uplifting moral and religious principles, but we are being asked to entrench for ever, if the amendments to the treaty go ahead, the little theorems and little equations of

economic theory, such as money supply, price stability, currency management and percentages of gross national product—and we have heard about 3 per cent. public sector debt ratios. All those rather simplistic and fashionable theorems and equations of economics are to be entrenched for ever in the new, amended treaty of Rome.

Governments, including ours, will then have to conform. If they do not conform to the provisions about excessive budget deficits, for example, they will be fined and punished. They will be charge-capped like recalcitrant local authorities under the poll tax provisions. All that will be under the control of bankers who will be the high priests of the mysteries of money. They will make all the decisions that will affect the lives of ordinary people.

I have a confession to make. I believe that price stability is quite a good thing. I do not really accept the argument that devaluation is a panacea for all the problems of British industry. I believe that Government borrowing should be controlled. In my day, I was a bit of a monetarist. However, tenets of economic theory are not absolute. They change with fashion. To attempt to entrench them in treaties which are outside the control of a democratic Parliament is ridiculous.

Sometimes it is necessary to trade inflation against unemployment. Sometimes it is necessary to realign the currency either upwards or downwards to protect industrial capacity. Sometimes it is necessary for the Government to borrow for investment and to redress grievances. Sometimes in a recession it is necessary to have budget deficits—large ones and perhaps even so-called excessive ones.

I do not know what the amendments to the treaty of Rome do to the Keynesians. I think that they are dished. They have had it, because they will not be allowed to have cyclical deficits, which are the basis of the philosophies and theories of John Maynard Keynes. I read nothing in *The Guardian* about the amendments to the treaty. I am surprised. I do not know where the Keynesians are. Where are the 300 Keynesians who like to write letters to *The Times* and *The Guardian*? I should have thought that they would be out demonstrating against the proposed amendments, which would entrench monetarism.

In their amendment, my right hon. and hon. Friends rightly urge the Government to work for several aims with which all Opposition Members agree. The amendment also talks about "social cohesion". I am not sure what that means, but there is a danger that, by transferring to unelected bankers the power to control money, we shall create a problem in respect of social cohesion. The precedents of the 1920s and 1930s in respect of social cohesion are not good. I do not understand the argument, but many people argue that the gold standard was far more flexible than what is proposed in the amendments to the treaty.

On re-reading my right hon. Friends' amendment, I was glad to see that we have dropped the silly idea that ECOFIN could control the European central bank. Even the Prime Minister floated that idea some time ago. I believe that it was thought up by some cynical French politicians—they do not come any more cynical than that—who thought that they could sell to the French electorate the idea of a central bank similar to the German Bundesbank by pretending that the animal called ECOFIN could control it. My right hon. Friends do not pretend that in their amendment.

The Opposition motion refers to ECOFIN as a "counterpart" to the European central bank. When I read it, I thought at first that it was a misprint for "counterweight". But it was not. When I looked up "counterpart" in a dictionary, I found that it was merely an opposite part to a part. Of course, the opposite part cannot control the part to which it is opposite.

We shall have a European central bank which is far more independent than even the Bundesbank. At least the Bundesbank has a Government breathing down its neck. We saw that when the governor of the Bundesbank had to agree to exchange one westmark for one eastmark. But there will be no Government watching over the European central bank. There will be only 12 Finance Ministers rushing back and forth to Brussels, checking plane and train timetables and rushing back to the House of Commons—often, if we have a hung Parliament—to make sure that the Government do not fall.

At least our motion is clear. We have accepted a single currency and everything that goes with it in terms of a central bank and control over Government expenditure. I am sorry that we have done so. It is an historic break with the tradition and beliefs of the party of which I am a member. I disagree with that move, but it is a fact, and one which we must all recognise.

As I said at the beginning of my speech—the Prime Minister said it, too—the economic and monetary union proposals are amendments to the treaty of Rome. When the United Kingdom acceded to the treaty of Rome, we accepted a large burden. The large burden was that, in terms of international law and sovereignty, we could not withdraw from that treaty without the consent of the other 11 members. But as lawyers always say, if there is a burden there is a benefit. The counterpart of the burden is the benefit that we do not have to agree to changes either. We can prevent the other 11 countries from making changes as the counterpart of the burden in that treaty.

Perhaps it is a forlorn hope, but I hope that one of these days—perhaps even at Maastricht—a British Government will finally have the courage and conviction to say, "Sorry, this is nonsense. Most people know and believe it is nonsense. We are not going to agree to these changes, because people outside the House and most hon. Members believe that they do not make any sense and will diminish our democracy."

9.50 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Like many other hon. Members, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has spoken of the Maastricht proposals and the philosophical challenge that they represent. I should like to think that a debate is now being undertaken in every other parliamentary assembly in the European Community with the candour and commitment that the House is showing. The fact that we are having this debate underlines that we are good Europeans because we view these issues with great seriousness and believe that they have considerable import for the Community's development, as it stands and in relation to a wider setting.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I shall not give way. Allow me to get under way. Many other hon. Members would like to speak and

[Mr. Biffen]

many hon. Members would like me to speak briefly, even more than they would like to listen to the hon. Gentleman's witty intervention.

If one looks back on the Community, one sees that one aspect of its economic development has been successful and has certainly been enforceable—the negative but highly productive policy of dismantling tariff barriers. The common external tariff was secured and internal tariff barriers eliminated, and there was little concern about the efficacy with which that was conducted. However, when the Community has had to deal with more positive economic operations, the story is quite different.

I take the example of the common agricultural policy, not because it is almost the institutional Aunt Sally, but because it has been in operation from the beginning of the Community and there has been a recurring commitment for its reform, which has failed.

What I find fascinating about the current state of the CAP are, first, the figures prepared by Mr. Anthony Rosen, an agricultural journalist, who approaches these matters with a robust pen, I admit. He has identified that, of current Community spending on agriculture in the Community, £18 billion comes from national aid and £24 billion comes from the CAP. I am not disparaging national aid, although I find it extraordinary that when I asked the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for its assessment—I did not wish merely to take a journalist's figures—its answer was:

> "The Government does not keep comprehensive details of the national subsidies and other state aids available to farmers in other Member States, since to do so would not be a cost-effective use of resources."

Again, I do not disparage Whitehall's reaction, but one immediately sees the problem. In a major area of economic policy, there is a national and a Community element. The Court of Auditors tells us that there is considerable fraud. I accept that that is in no sense a continental European characteristic—it is inherent in the policy, however and wherever it is applied. However, if that situation exists, we ought to stop and consider the best framework to establish for future economic co-operation which involves the positive involvement of Community decisions.

If we are to transfer responsibility for energy, the environment, health and social security—the list is ambitious—we must at least reflect on what we think are likely to be the consequences. Many of my hon. Friends are worried about the actual transfer, and I acknowledge that anxiety. What concerns me is the total volume of public spending. There will be, not just a transfer, but more spending because there will be one further layer of government. If I may trivialise my argument, it will be local government reform writ large.

Those circumstances require the most careful consideration by both sides of the House—by the Conservatives because we have an anxiety about levels of public spending anyway, and by the Left because public spending is a most sensitive item of policy. It should be under clear, identifiable, political control. We are drifting towards, not some great tyrannical community, like a huge, effective leviathan, but a great lumbering spender of money without appropriate political direction. Nothing that I see in prospect at Maastricht persuades me that that fundamental problem is being addressed. It is being accepted.

Nevertheless, I do not disparage the idea of having Maastricht. From time to time there must be a major stocktaking in the European Community. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and many others on both sides of the House have pointed out, the most extraordinary development over the past couple of years has been the disintegration of the Soviet Union. A number of Warsaw pact countries, such as Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, are already developing a relationship with the west. I am sure that that trend will be carried further east to incorporate central Europe and, eventually, whatever pattern of states evolves from the decayed Soviet Union.

If there is to be an attempt to reassess the Community and redesign its objectives—we should have a new Messina in order to take stock of these challenges and then design a new European structure—that is what we should be considering. Obviously, that cannot be secured speedily. The situation in the successor states to the Soviet Union is still completely in flux. The situation in central European countries needs patient handling. Nevertheless, priorities are beginning to rebuild themselves. There is need for a political agreement, some military agreement as well as some economic agreement that can be phased in over time. That will provide the framework of a wider Europe, which is the real challenge. It is the challenge to which Maastricht is almost wholly irrelevant.

Given that situation, we must think of what institutions we need to anticipate that wider Europe which not only challenges us, but is unavoidable. I have no doubt about the words of President de Gaulle at his press conference in September 1960—after all, he had talked of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals—when he said:

> "What are the realities of Europe? What are the pillars on which it can be built? The truth is that those pillars are the States of Europe . . . States each of which, indeed, has its own genius, history and language, its own sorrows, glories and ambitions, but States that are the only entities with the right to give orders and the power to be obeyed.

Those words are clear and relevant.

Then, in good faith and good nature, I consult the Order Paper, and read the Government motion, the Opposition amendment, the amendment of the Liberal Democrats—they are all about 20 lines long. I cannot think of another such extraordinary situation in which an issue of principle evokes such a response. That leads me to believe that there is an attempt to sidestep the profound central issue of principle. That issue is that Maastricht, by a fast route, a slow route or almost any other route, is not relevant to the real challenge before us. Reflecting thus, I feel that my course must be to vote against the Government motion.

10 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): It is always a pleasure to listen to the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), but because of lack of time hon. Members will understand if I do not follow up many of the controversial things that he said.

I look at Europe from a different perspective. I am a member of a party that urges Scottish independence and full member status for the Scottish nation within the European Community. We do so because we believe that the union of the United Kingdom is unequal, that the Scots are politically frustrated within its framework, and

that we are more likely to find within the union of the European Community the equality necessary to alleviate our present frustration.

There will be seven small states in the Community which, while accounting for 16 per cent. of the population, will wield 37 per cent. of the votes in the Council of Ministers. On the "Analysis" programme on BBC radio 4 on 19 September, the Danish Prime Minister was asked about his country's position on loss of sovereignty. He replied:

"I feel today a lot more powerful than a Danish Prime Minister would have felt years ago. Why? . . . We have influence, and we have a lot more influence than is fair, considering that we are such a small nation".

I have never understood the logic of people who argue against Scotland being a member state of the Community, as are Denmark and Ireland. We would have far greater power and influence over the European matters that affect us, and would have considerable sovereignty on domestic affairs—matters peculiar to Scotland.

I do not approach the debate simply from the point of view of Scottish self-interest. We approach the European Community in the context of Europe as a whole, both west and east. To the Scottish National party, Europe after the cold war seems to be divided into three zones. There is a zone of turmoil—consisting of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Romania and Albania—a zone of considerable economic difficulty—comprising Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia—and a zone of stability—that is the European Community and the EFTA countries surrounding it—of which the European Community is probably the most important part.

Whatever criticisms we may have, compared with the rest of Europe the European Community has been successful both politically and economically. The continuation of the Community's solidarity and integration is extremely important for dealing with the problems in the zones of difficulty and turmoil. That is why we welcome whatever impetus might come from Maastricht and elsewhere towards closer union between the member states of the Community. Therefore, any criticism that we make of the draft treaties is done in a constructive spirit in the hope that Europe, when it moves closer towards unity, will do so effectively and with the maximum sensitivity.

Earlier, an hon. Member said that Maastricht was the rubicon, but that is a matter of opinion. I do not believe that we crossed the rubicon in 1972 when we signed the treaty of accession, or in 1975. I believe that this state crossed the rubicon when we signed the single market agreement. There is a paradox associated with the liberalisation inherent in the single market, because one needs a great deal of regulation to ensure a level playing field for everyone. As the need for regulation develops within the Community, there will be more unity and joint action. That will lead to great pressure, principally from the business community, to produce for that single market a single monetary policy, a central European central bank and, ultimately, a single currency. There is logic in that theoretical argument.

I greatly doubt whether, at the end of 1996, the convergence of eight countries will be sufficient to allow them to move to a single currency. It is interesting that there are break points every two years after 1996 in the draft EMU treaty. Those breaks will enable member states to re-examine the situation to see whether they can move towards that single currency.

I was fascinated by the speech of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). She discussed what would happen if eight former separate currencies, or perhaps 11, moved to a single currency. The right hon. Lady asked whether sterling, if disengaged from that single currency, would shadow it, or float free from it. She also asked why, if sterling shadowed the single currency, it should not be part of that single currency in the first place.

The right hon. Lady then said, however, that she would vote for the Government motion. That is a triumph of loyalty over logic, because the whole tenor of her speech was that one cannot sign the draft treaty because if we do, ultimately, no matter what one says about an opt-out, we will be part of the single currency anyway. She believes that everyone will face catastrophe thereafter.

I was also rather disturbed by the speech from the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), who made a cogent argument for greater unity and commonality in decision making within the Community. However, on 13 November he wrote an article in the *Financial Times* in which he said that, if one extended the competence of the Community to social affairs, it would be "a bridge too far". Why? If we are to liberalise capital movements and the free flow of capital goods and services, surely working people should be entitled to defend themselves by taking central action throughout the Community under the social charter. The Conservative party cannot have it both ways. If it is all right to have the liberalisation of capital, it is okay to mobilise working people to defend their interests.

We are in favour of greater unity. How we forge that unity is an important principle that will no doubt be dodged at Maastricht. Some argue that it should be forged on a federal basis. That means a contract between states which join an organisation which, theoretically, divides the power between them. Let us consider what has happened in the 19 existing federations. There is a great tendency for the centre to take power unto itself, principally because it makes the great decisions about war, peace and security. It therefore becomes the most powerful part of the federation, no matter what the constitutional theory might be.

We are not in favour of federalism, because we do not believe that that is the right framework by which to try to govern about 350 million people. If the Community extends to between 24 and 30 states, we will be talking about 450 million people. The federal basis would not be sensitive enough to the needs of all those people.

We prefer the confederal system, where ultimate political and legal supremacy rests with the constituent members—the sovereign states. The central institutions are subordinate to them and the legislative body consists of member state delegates who decide upon common policies. That is a reasonable description of a Community which would be sui juris but which would be based on a confederal model.

We do not want any departure from the legal basis of the Community, which means that sovereign, independent states—as recognised in international law—agree through international treaties to pool a certain amount of their sovereignty, but only that amount which they are willing to give to central institutions. The Community will not depart from that.

I understand that, in December 1992, which is after the general election, the European Council will hold a summit in Edinburgh. As the Scottish National party expects to

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

win the mandate for independence at the next general election—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh now, but they will laugh on the other side of their faces after the general election. We look forward to hosting that summit in Edinburgh.

10.10 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Many eminent commentators have said that the political union treaty is more important than the economic treaty. I entirely reject that view, as any realist would. A realist would understand that ultimate power and authority rest with he who holds the purse strings. It is ridiculous to believe that we can have an independent defence or foreign policy if we do not control our own money.

For example, does anyone seriously believe that the Falklands campaign could have been fought if economic and monetary union had been in place in 1983, or that we could have gone to war in the Gulf in support of our United States allies if a single currency had been in force last year? Some would say that such freedom of action is impossible only if we do not control our own fiscal policy, but all the evidence points to the fact that the European Community wants ultimately to do just that—control our fiscal policy.

To paraphrase the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), if we give the European Community an inch it will take a mile. I must warn hon. Members that talking up the importance of political union and talking down the importance of economic and monetary union is simply a device to get hon. Members through the eye of the proverbial needle, whence there would be no return.

Other commentators point out that there is no danger in signing the treaty at Maastricht because of the opt-out clause, which would allow exemption from a single currency. However, that opt-out is sustainable only if it is continuously and vigorously defended. The sword of Damocles would hang over us for ever and a day until, perhaps by the process of attrition, the House accepted the principle of a single currency. If it did not happen in that way, the arithmetic shows that this or any successor Government could introduce a single currency on a whipped vote. Alternatively, on a free vote, all Liberal Members, the majority of Labour Members and a sufficient number of Conservative Members would ensure that a single currency reached the statute book.

I invite hon. Members to search their hearts and ask whether it will ever be any easier than in the vote tomorrow night to express their candid view on a single currency. They should have no doubt that the adoption of the draft treaty proposals means nothing less than the full acceptance of a commitment to a single currency. Tomorrow night's vote is not a vote of confidence; subsequent votes may be.

The principle of a single currency is wrong and the Government should be prepared to walk away from the conference table. The British people will neither forgive nor forget the party that fudges this issue. To the electorate, one is either for or against the single currency; there are no shades in between.

What effect will a single currency have on hon. Members? I represent an agricultural constituency, and farmers there say to me, "Your Government do not have a policy for British agriculture," to which I reply, "As long as we embrace the common agricultural policy, we cannot have a domestic or national policy. The common agricultural policy has to be my Government's policy." I hear what those farmers say, and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food perhaps agrees with what they say, but without the support of the other countries in the Community, he is relatively powerless to satisfy those farmers.

Let us consider the position of other Ministers, particularly the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were we to have a single currency. There would be but one effective Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he or she would not be at No. 11 Downing street. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor would find himself in the same hapless position as our current Agriculture Minister—he would have all the responsibility without the authority to discharge it. That is a classic formula for disaster, and disastrous it would be, not just for the House and the parties represented in it, but also for the members of those respective parties.

When the British people discover that one party is no different from any other in the sense that, if elected to government, each would bear the responsibility for our nation's affairs without the authority to deliver people's natural and legitimate aspirations, the electorate will reject the entire body politic as we know it. The events of eastern Europe should be a warning to us all. The people of eastern Europe and Russia have not rejected federalism because their central Governments satisfied their aspirations. On the contrary, they have decisively rejected federalism because it denied them their aspirations.

What is the man in the street entitled to conclude when he sees the break-up of federalism in eastern Europe and Russia, and tiny countries such as Latvia, with a population of only 2·5 million, rejecting the eastern-style single currency of the rouble area and coming to this country with a request to the royal mint to mint their own sovereign currency? The man in the street might conclude that his country's politicians were either myopic or out of touch with the people. He might ask whether anyone had given him a satisfactory answer to the question that he might reasonably ask about what benefits he would derive from a single currency. I am speaking of tangible benefits, not abstract ones, which satisfy nobody and pay no bills.

It is not enough to say that we might miss the train or be left behind. How much is that worth on a balance sheet, when the other side of the sheet shows ever-increasing movements of funds from the United Kingdom to southern Europe, which is what would happen? One has only to consider the United Kingdom experience. In the United Kingdom, which for a long time has enjoyed political and economic union complete with a single currency, there has been a substantial and continuing movement of funds from the one richer country to the three poorer countries.

I am tempted to say now, particularly to those Opposition Members representing the regions of our nation, that charity begins at home. I say that because the prospect for the regions of Scotland, Wales and Ireland is that they will no longer be competing with each other for the British taxpayer's money, but competing in the greater Community against the countries of southern Europe—Greece, southern Italy, southern Spain and Portugal. If they believe that in that arena they will do better than they are doing now, they will believe anything.

In the Community that we are putting together, poorer nations must learn to maximise the potential for their prosperity from the market opportunities that are opening up to them, and not by beggaring their neighbours.

Whatever treaty obligations are entered into at this stage, the Government must carry the British people with them. To ignore public opinion, especially in pursuit of abstract idealism, is the height of arrogance and political folly. Never must we underestimate the ability of the British people to stand up to bullies, to defend principle and, if necessary, to stand alone. For all our sakes, let us do what is right for Britain by rejecting now, just as did the peoples of eastern Europe, federalism and the single currency.

10.20 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am sure that, as parliamentarians, we are all greatly influenced in our views by different levels of loyalties—to our constituents, to our party, to our region, whatever part of the United Kingdom we come from, to the United Kingdom and, if we believe in an evolving European Community, to what we think are the best interests of the Community as a whole. Indeed, we should look wider than that, to the rest of Europe and to the world beyond.

I shall seek to evaluate the Maastricht proposals in the light of these different levels of loyalty to help me to decide whether what is on offer is worth supporting. I have never thought that the EC was intrinsically or automatically good or bad, as much depends on the effect of what is decided on our constituents and, indeed, on the people of Europe as a whole. As a result, I have regretted the frequent over-simplification that often takes place in European Community debates. Indeed, the oversimplification that is involved in the labels pro and anti-European is often unhelpful. I am not convinced that the new labels of Euro-sceptics and Euro-federalists are much more helpful, for "federalism" seems to be a misused and contested term. In my view, federalism, while having an element of union, is based very much on the principle of decentralisation.

The term "subsidiarity" has been used during the debate. The Prime Minister seemed to describe the concept as denoting national versus European decision-making levels. To me, subsidiarity means taking decisions at the most appropriate level, whether it be European, national, regional or local. All levels of decision taking have an important part to play in our political process.

The over-simplification of the issues was part and parcel of a Gallup poll that took place last weekend. I and many other Labour Members were contacted and asked many over-simplified questions about our views on the European Community issue. I did not know at the time who had commissioned the poll, but I learned afterwards that it was the Conservative party. I strongly resent having my views sought in such an underhand way. I much prefer expressing my views publicly in the House to my constituents and others.

The main reason for many Opposition Members feeling more warmly towards the European Community now than they did in the past is the record of the Community in the past few years and the contrast between what has happened elsewhere in the Community and what we have seen take place in Britain. I believe that we have fallen badly behind in the three important areas of economic development, social policies and, sadly, the quality of our democracy.

On economic development, we have failed to pursue the policies of partnership between Government and industry which are commonplace elsewhere in Europe and which involve not only management but trade unions and workers' representatives in a much more positive way than anything that has happened under this Government. We have fallen badly behind in terms of investment. We have higher interest rates, and recently we have also had rapidly rising unemployment compared with the rest of the EC.

On social policies, our record has been appalling: on that, I agree strongly with the points made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who has just come into the Chamber, who strongly criticised the Government's record on social policies.

It is clear that there are two different views in the House of what a large market should be all about. There is the Government's view, which seems to see a large market as an end in itself, and there is the view expressed by my right hon. Friend, which sees a large market as successful only if it improves the quality of life of our citizens.

The British people understand what is happening in the EC, and they understand that the Government have stood out against other Governments in blocking positive measures which would have benefited our citizens.

Three questions about the social dimension should be addressed to the Government. First, is it fair that bad employers should effectively be subsidised by the state? In the absence of a minimum wage, many of our constituents earn such low wages that they have to resort to state benefits on top. Why should the state subsidise bad employers in that way?

Secondly, how do other countries that have a minimum wage and a better employment rights structure manage to cope so well? Thirdly, have the Government forgotten that, in the preamble to the treaty of Rome, which they say they support, there is a commitment to the constant improvement in living and working conditions of the people of Europe? For me, a key test will be how far the social provisions can be incorporated into the Maastricht agreement. That is important, and I am glad that the Opposition's motion makes it so clear.

Unfortunately, the only thing that seems to unite Conservative Members in this debate is their refusal to accept the social charter and the social measures which many of us feel are so important.

The final element to which I wish to refer is the quality of our democracy, which has exercised the minds of many hon. Members today. In the past 12 years, we have become one of the most centralised states in the EC, which I greatly regret. I am dismayed that so little has been done to decentralise, when so many other EC countries have clearly felt the benefits, both economic and political, of taking the decentralised route.

One of the Maastricht proposals is the proposal to create a body to represent the regions of the EC. I recently asked the Prime Minister about that, and was rather surprised to receive the answer that the Government supported proposals in the intergovernmental conference for a new consultative body to represent the regions at Community level. I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will tell me how that representation will be decided. Will

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

all the regions be represented as well as the nations of the United Kingdom? Can we be assured that those regional representatives will reflect the political majority in those regions and will not simply be Government nominees, as we have seen in so many quangos and regional bodies that have been set up in recent years?

The Maastricht summit gives us great opportunities for economic, social and democratic reform. However, the Prime Minister is not capable of obtaining a deal which will be to the benefit of the British people. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot claim on the one hand to be at the heart of Europe and at the same time want to be on the periphery of Europe and seem to want us to go at a slower speed than anyone else. That is an inconsistent position.

If the Prime Minister really wants to help the British people, he should use Maastricht to give us a system which will promote balanced regional economic development throughout the United Kingdom, attack some of the social ills and divisions which beset British society at present and, finally, enhance not detract from the quality of British democracy.

10.29 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I strenuously reject the suggestion of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is not the best person to negotiate on behalf of Britain at the forthcoming summit. I believe that the House will overwhelmingly register its confidence in his abilities in that role.

This remarkable and fine debate has thrown up some strange bedfellows, including the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher)—who found common ground on the question of a referendum.

In the 20 years since the House voted to accede to the European Community—which is now the destination of no less than 52 per cent. of Britain's exports—it has become a major factor in world trade and international power-broking. It has more than fulfilled its founding fathers' two objectives: to rebuild the economy of a shattered Europe, and to bury the hatchet between France and Germany and so bind together the nations of Europe that they would never go to war again.

Those substantial achievements are already on the record. We are now on the verge of a new, exciting, and long-overdue step—the creation of a single European market. That has already been agreed, and it will be in place by the end of next year. In a typically British way, we have failed to take the credit that is due to us for that achievement, which had its origins in the Kangaroo group of Members of the European Parliament founded by the late Basil de Ferranti specifically to break down the trade barriers that existed in Europe at a time when none of the other major Community partners wanted to know anything about it. They rested secure behind their trade barriers, and it was above all a British initiative that led to the creation of the single European market.

After advancing at a snail's pace for many years, we suddenly find ourselves invited to participate in a Gadarene rush towards economic and political union. I have always believed in the cause of European unity. It was the issue that first brought me into active politics as long ago as 1964. I believe still that Britain's place is at the heart of Europe, although every time that puffed-up functionary, M. Delors, vouchsafes a little more of his vision of a centralised, bureaucratic, and socialist Europe, I confess that I have my doubts.

For one who claims to be the champion of European unity, M. Delors is its worst advocate, having a unique capacity to raise the hackles of the British people. That said, let no one doubt Europe's importance to Britain. Once the channel tunnel is built, from my Manchester constituency alone, seven freight trains a night will leave Trafford Park for Europe.

Nor should we underestimate the importance of Britain to Europe, for we have much to contribute and not just to the agricultural fund. Some half a million of our sons lie in Flanders fields—our sacrifice against tyranny in Europe. And today we have a contribution to make in terms of our history of free trade, our outward-looking attitude to the world, and the weight of our tradition of parliamentary and democratic government stretching back over the centuries—something unmatched by any of our partners, for some of whom the very concept of democracy is of recent origin.

We stand on the brink of two momentous decisions at Maastricht. We are invited to sign up for, on the one hand, economic and monetary union and, on the other, political union. I agree with everything that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said today, and I wish him every success at Maastricht. I have little doubt, however, that, despite Britain's reservations, our partners will move forward to economic and monetary union, and to the creation of a single currency. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for Britain to stand aloof from that process without unacceptable damage being done to our economic interests. I happen to believe that the fears that have been voiced on that account are exaggerated.

I do not accept that the proposal represents a major surrender of sovereignty. Just as the dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were able to conduct their own economic policies while belonging to the sterling area —having their own Chancellors of the Exchequer operating their own fiscal policies, and raising their own tax revenues—so Britain will retain a wide freedom of action, while enjoying the benefit of belonging to a currency and economy underpinned by what will undoubtedly be the strongest currency in the world.

But political union is a different matter. Thanks to our parliamentary system and the stability that it has given us, the British people have been spared the horrors of revolution, civil war and invasion for more than 300 years. In that we are unique. Our Parliament has prevailed in the face of fascism, Marxism and communism, where others succumbed.

Mr. Butterfill: And socialism.

Mr. Churchill: Indeed.

That, undoubtedly, is why the British people hold this Parliament—if not its Members—in such affection. But woe betide the Government, or the Members of this House, who sell our Parliament for a mess of European pottage. The British people will not accept the relegation of the mother of Parliaments to the level of the legislature of the state of Nevada; but that is what is on offer to us if we go down the path of full political union. The House must retain control of those aspects of our national life

that are properly dealt with here: above all, we must retain responsibility for key decisions about foreign policy and defence, and the issues of war and peace.

I have every confidence that my right hon. Friend will not sell the pass on those vital issues, and that, if need be, he will indeed exercise our veto. To paraphrase Canning, however, it is time to call into being eastern Europe to redress the balance of western Europe. In the present circumstances, it is more important to widen the Community—to include the nations of EFTA and the new democracies of eastern Europe—than to deepen the political union among the Twelve.

I do not believe that those countries will be half as eager to abandon their new-found sovereignty so soon after regaining it. That is the path that we must pursue, with vigour and determination. We must build a free and democratic Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to the Urals: a Europe that will, however, respect the essential sovereignty of national Parliaments, and not trample them underfoot.

Mr. Butterfill: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am concerned about the welfare of certain hon. Members who, I know, would not voluntarily be absent from the Chamber, and who I fear may be detained elsewhere against their will. I refer, of course, to the Liberal Democrats, who I know would be here if they could.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman is being facetious during time that is very precious to the House. To my mind, his is a bogus point of order.

10.38 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I have never been fanatical about Europe, but I accept that we are now in Europe.

I was amazed by the performance of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). The speech by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) was remarkable. We shall no doubt hear another remarkable speech from the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). Both right hon. Members seem now to be very anti-Common Market, yet they were in the Cabinet when all the moves were being made that led to the passing of the Single European Act and to the creation of the single European market.

One would not have imagined, listening to the speech of the right hon. Member for Finchley, that she was the Prime Minister throughout that period and that it was she who took us along that road. What she told us today was completely different from what she did when she was Prime Minister. She took us into the exchange rate mechanism at the wrong rate and at the wrong time. She did so for political reasons, in the hope of retaining her post as Prime Minister. She failed.

It is difficult to believe that the former Prime Minister and her right hon. Friends, who were with her when they agreed to the single European market, never imagined that there would be demands for a single European currency or for a single European bank. If they did not, they must have been completely naive, which I do not believe for one moment. Neither the right hon. Member for Finchley, nor her colleagues who supported her, can escape from their responsibility.

Whether we like it or not, to all intents and purposes there is already a single European currency and a single European bank—the deutschmark and the Bundesbank. We read today that the market is strengthening and that, if the Germans put up their interest rates, we shall do the same, which is the complete opposite of what the Conservatives want. However, that move will be dictated to us. What we should therefore be asking ourselves is whether we can derive any benefits from the position in which we find ourselves.

We must ensure that this central bank is controlled not by bankers but by politicians, in the interests of people. However, the Conservatives are completely against that. They are also completely against any improvement in social conditions for ordinary people. They are against people being given information about the company that they work for. When Leyland Trucks was privatised, Daf in Holland, and the trade unions there, knew a great deal more about it than we did. They were told at midday. They had already been made well aware of it. I do not see why employees should not have information on their work or why they should work dreadfully long hours.

I should like Norway, Finland and Sweden to join the EC—they would certainly give it a new dimension. I have no doubt that eastern European countries and the Soviet Union will join.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): What about the vodka made in Warrington?

Mr. Hoyle: And very good vodka it is.

Europe must become wider and more democratic. The problem is that the Conservative party has negotiated nothing and accepted everything. I was amazed to hear a Conservative Member say, "We put into effect everything that happens in the market." The problem has often been that the Government have been absent from the negotiating table.

I hope that Europe will be a major issue in the forthcoming general election, when no doubt we shall see the return of a Labour Government.

10.46 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) said that he would prefer a central bank run by politicians. With all respect to him, if that central bank were run by his party, I would have the gravest apprehension about the state of the currency for which it was responsible.

Some years ago, a prominent European leader set out in extremely clear terms the future agenda for the European Community and pointed out that it would be crucial

"to heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what unites us";

that the development of the European Community was not just a matter of a trading bloc but a question of creating

"a series of new policies to promote the economic, social and political growth"

of the Community; and that that meant

"giving greater depth to the Community in both its internal and external activities."

Those were the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in a memorandum to her fellow Heads of Government in 1984. She was right then, and I believe that those views are right now.

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

We are debating the deepening of the internal and external mechanisms of the Community, which will be the subject of Maastricht. The need to achieve more depth to those mechanisms is greater because the pressures on the European Community to make itself a presence in the world are so much stronger and the opportunities to do so are much greater because of the collapse and the changes in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. The world consists of the three key blocs of the Americas, Japan and the Pacific and western Europe.

The question is, are we, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister says, to be at the heart of the Community? There can be no doubt that, if we are not, we shall be in serious trouble—and not only in economic terms. Our impact in terms of policies and our security would be seriously diminished or, indeed, irrelevant. We are all concerned about the national interest. I urge all right hon. and hon. Members who are hostile to or deeply suspicious of the direction that the European Community is taking to consider how the national interest would be served if Britain were completely out of step.

Let us consider especially the single currency. The tone of the debate has suggested that the single currency will arrive the day after tomorrow, but that is manifestly not the case. There are serious problems involved in harnessing a system that could incorporate, for example, Germany and Greece at the two extremes. Hon. Members have spoken about the huge problems to be overcome, such as divergence. Such a problem is much greater for those countries than for Britain. We could live more easily with the problems that will undoubtedly arise with a single currency than could Germany or Greece and Portugal.

I urge right hon. and hon. Members who have serious doubts about the single currency or when it may come —who knows whether it might be in four or five years? —to consider Britain's interests as a trading nation and what the leaders of business and industry in Britain have said. For example, Lord Alexander, the chairman of National Westminster bank, said that greater currency integration was a compelling impetus for this country. The Governor of the Bank of England stressed the importance of stability of currencies to this country.

I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends who have doubts about the arrival of a single currency that there would be serious consequences for Britain if we were left out. The champagne corks would be popping in Frankfurt and Paris because of the damage caused to the City of London, which earns us about £4·5 billion every year. One of my hon. Friends said that we could become like Switzerland, but we cannot. That option is not open to us.

There are immense problems with the two conferences, but they are not difficult only for the United Kingdom. Yes, we are significantly different for reasons of geography, culture and history from the other 11 members, but their divergences are also important. It is not only the United Kingdom that has problems, and we are not alone in having to make concessions and compromises.

Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends have not given sufficient credit to the immense achievements already made by our negotiating team under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. We have yet to see what the team finally brings home when the Maastricht negotiations have been concluded, but it deserves sincere congratulations.

Many hon. Members have severe doubts about Britain's continuing collaboration in the move to closer union—none of us know what that will mean in the future —but it is an objective to which nearly all Conservative Members of Parliament have signed up through successive general elections and through various steps that our party has taken and of which it is rightly proud. We must continue to press for closer union.

People are beginning to say that we have gone on the wrong track. We must ask what the other 11 countries are doing. The European Free Trade Association countries, such as Sweden and Austria, want to join the European Community and are not content with EFTA. The countries of eastern Europe are knocking on the door of the European Community. Are those countries misguided? Are they mad? Are they all socialist? Are they all drunk? Why do they want to be ruled by faceless, unelected bureaucrats from Brussels? The answer must be that they have a point. There must be something about the ever closer union to which we have been attached for so long.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends who are doubting Thomases not to be afraid. The French are not frightened of losing their Frenchness by having a positive role in Britain. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) suggested that there would be dangers in a British defence force being sent into military action against the wishes of the House. Of course that would be unthinkable, and it would be equally unthinkable for the French. That fear is a bogey with which we must not frighten ourselves. I urge my hon. Friends not to talk themselves into an unreal situation.

There are challenges and difficulties, but I am certain that we can get over them under the skilful leadership that has already been demonstrated. I warmly applaud what has been achieved by my right hon. Friends in the Government, and I shall have great pleasure tomorrow night in supporting them in the Lobby.

10.56 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). I hope that he will excuse me for not following his arguments because of the time limit.

I begin in a sense where the Prime Minister left off this afternoon. He did not rise to any great heights in his speech. We should be grateful to him for giving us some detail about the Government's negotiating position in Maastricht, although he did not tarry long on the subjects of economic convergence or the social charter. He did not tell us, for example, whether he thought that the Government believed in real or nominal economic convergence. It is a fact that we can get our inflation rate down to the German inflation rate, but the Germans have a 2 per cent. growth in their economy, whereas we have a recession. That is hardly a recipe for economic success.

The Prime Minister should have told the House whether he believed in real economic convergence. To find a definition of real economic convergence, one has to look at the Opposition amendment. It refers to "high levels of employment" and "sustainable non-inflationary growth".

In my view and in the view of many banks whose reports I have read, convergence involves growth of about 2 per cent. a year. Convergence consists of a

"balanced regional and national economic development"

and of "social cohesion".

The Prime Minister did not linger long on the social charter. The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) was rather churlish in his intervention in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. It was clearly a bogus intervention, which ended up as a mini-speech. It was clearly intended to distract the Leader of the Opposition from his speech, which had vision and commitment. If Conservative Members had listened to that speech in the manner of a debate worthy of a parliamentary occasion, they would have understood the approach that has been developed by the Labour party. They would have been surprised that we have developed a positive approach to Europe whereas the Government are on the defensive.

It was left to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) to draw the attention of the House to the social charter, on which I should like to ask the Prime Minister a series of questions. Does he believe in freedom of movement within the Community? Does he believe in social protection? Does he believe in vocational training? Does he believe in protection of children and adolescents? Does he believe in the protection of elderly and disabled persons? Of course he does. I would not claim that he does not. So why does he not sign the social charter? Why does he not reverse the decision of his predecessor in Strasbourg?

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Small Green): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: I shall not give way, in view of the time.

We heard a remarkable intervention from the former Prime Minister which showed how quickly one can go rusty in the House of Commons and how bereft one can be of the parliamentary crib provided by the civil servants. The Prime Minister talked of swinging handbags and hardened cricket bats.

Mr. Morgan: The former Prime Minister.

Mr. Bell: The former Prime Minister—I fall into the same trap every time, and I shall come to the reason for that in a moment.

Of course, they do not play cricket in Europe and people do not understand that language. Her speech was incoherent in its contradictions. Her remarks on a referendum for a single currency were remarkable from a person who was Prime Minister for 12 years.

We heard an interesting intervention from the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). He described parliamentary democracy and representative democracy, and ended by saying that he was gratified that the Prime Minister took the same view as him of a referendum. Tonight we heard on the nine o'clock news that briefings had been issued from No. 10 Downing street that a referendum was not ruled out. That may be the smack of firm government.

There was an interesting article recently in *The Independent* by John Pienaar, referring to the former Prime Minister's intention to speak in today's debate. The article said that if the present Prime Minister were to oppose the former Prime Minister—we must get our definitions right—

"one minister said. 'The party would roll over her. It just does. That's the way the beast operates.'"

The beast does not operate like that at No. 10 Downing street.

I am reminded of the exchanges between Lord Home when he was Prime Minister and Lord Wilson when he was Leader of the Opposition. Some interesting and kind words were said by General de Gaulle about Britain. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who is not in his place, referred to General de Gaulle. When those kind remarks were made, Harold Wilson said of the Prime Minister, "He rolls on his back like a spaniel."

Today, the former Prime Minister made a speech and now the whole of Downing street is running from one end of the corridor to another saying that a referendum is not ruled out. That is hardly the smack of firm government. If the Prime Minister wishes to have a strong hand when he goes to Maastricht, he is going the wrong way about it. He gives the impression that he is not entirely clear about what he seeks to achieve.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) asked whether one believed in a strong internal market or a federal Europe, or whether there was nothing in between. That dilemma has not been resolved in my mind or that of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister made much of his internal market. A new Europe that is built on an internal market with no collective provision is a Europe doomed to failure. There can be no successful economic union for the citizens of Britain or Europe if there is no social dimension.

If, in years to come, we end up with a breakdown in law and order, barricaded in our homes, what good will be an internal market which happens to be economically successful? We would be living the life in the fictional account of life in New York, "The Bonfire of the Vanities" —extreme wealth and extreme deprivation. That will not be a successful Europe. Basing oneself on economics alone and a naked capitalism without the social dimension will be doomed to failure.

We have heard a great deal about a new Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) talked of a new European order. The *Evening Standard* tonight spoke of

"the plain-speaking guide to a new Europe."

In our national executive document dealing with monetary union, we also spoke about a new Europe. We are discussing not a federal Europe or a free trade area, but a new Europe. This new Europe, as the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, quoting Jean Monnet, should not be a Europe that gives itself the airs and graces of a nation state.

People such as Jean Monnet had a vision of a Europe free from war, and they had that vision, not for themselves, but for their grandchildren. They wanted them to live in a world and a Europe at peace. That is what they have achieved.

There is a saying in the republic of Ireland, "On the day, one will do the right thing." I am sure that, when the Prime Minister gets to Maastricht, he will do the right thing on the day. At that conference, he will sign documents that will lead not to a federal Europe but to the new Europe to which I have referred. It will be an interdependent Europe, based on the autonomy of nation states, linked through common institutions. It will not be a federal Europe, but it will be a new Europe all the same.

[Mr. Bell]

In the past, there have been people who looked to the future and to the future of their children and grandchildren, and that is what we should be doing. We should set aside all the shibboleths, myths and fantasies that we have heard in the debate and get to the truth, which is a new Europe for our children and grandchildren —a Europe that is positive, outward-looking and economically strong, but has the social dimension that will make life worth living for future generations.

11.5 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) did the House a great service by reminding us of the past of the European Community, its origins and the tremendously brave aspirations associated with its founding. It is important for us to remember what an enormous contribution the Community has made to peace and stability, not merely in western Europe but throughout the world, and to give adequate weight to that perspective. Nevertheless, we must be practical. In considering further economic and political union, we must decide whether benefits are to be gained for this country by proceeding further down that path.

If we think about economic and monetary union and our present position in the Community, we realise that we are inextricably tied to Europe. When we joined in 1973, only 26·4 per cent. of our exports went to the Community. The Library tells me that the figure is now 53·3 per cent. Germany is our biggest trading partner.

Unless we were to change our existing policies radically, there is no way that we can resile from being inextricably tied up with the EC. That view is shared by the business community in this country. Let us consider the representations made to hon. Members before this debate by the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the City and all our major companies. They are telling us that we must proceed further with economic and monetary union.

Some of our colleagues are uncertain about monetary union and are worried that going further down that path may lead to a loss of sovereignty. I ask them to consider that, in reality, we are being asked to behave responsibly: to eliminate budget deficits; to live within our means; and, to introduce convergence within the economies in the Community. All that is thoroughly desirable. Many hon. Members who have apprehensions would not disagree that that is a correct economic policy to pursue. They say that if we are forced into a straightjacket we will lose our sovereignty. Sovereignty to do what? To spend more than we can afford, to fritter away our national assets or to behave irresponsibly? I do not think any Member of this House would wish to retain that sort of sovereignty. Therefore, we have nothing to fear from economic and monetary union.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been busy negotiating on the ultimate aspect of that, which is a single currency. It is arguable whether in the foreseeable future we shall reach the necessary degree of convergence to achieve it. Even if we reach a point where the majority of member states feel that a single currency is a viable proposition, we will still have an option. The Prime Minister has negotiated that we may then opt in. I was puzzled earlier when the Leader of the Opposition said that he did not understand the difference between opting in and opting out. Once upon a time, Labour Members were most concerned about the difference between opting in and opting out.

This is a matter on which Parliament must ultimately decide. It should not be the subject of a referendum. First, the complexity of the issue makes it almost impossible to frame an adequate question for a referendum. Even if that could be overcome, we are concerned with the sovereignty of this House. Those who say that we would lose sovereignty must accept that a referendum would deny the sovereignty of this House. That is a contradiction in terms.

Mr. John Browne : Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Butterfill: No, I must proceed.

I now come to political union. We can do many things together in Europe, either within or without the treaties. There are many advantages to be gained in co-operating with other member states to ensure that we do not behave in a way which damages each other's environment. Several hon. Members have rightly raised anxieties about the implementation of existing treaties. The enforcement of what we have already decided to do and the creation of a true single market is a legitimate concern of the EC. Policing, drugs, crime and terrorism are all areas where we could and should co-operate, either within or without the treaties.

At the same time, we must not bind the Community into such a tight form that it will exclude the future membership of the countries of eastern Europe and of the European Free Trade Association. It is essential to decide what should and what should not be within the competence of the Community. If we are to give people confidence that the Community should be given greater powers, it is absolutely vital that we define the whole principle of subsidiarity.

I do not believe that the definition proposed in the draft treaty should be acceptable to hon. Members. I offer them the definition that on 2 November *The Economist* suggested was appropriate:

> "All laws will be made at national or lower level except where flows across frontiers of goods, services, money, people and pollution make Community law indispensable."

That seems an admirable definition of what should constitute subsidiarity. It would give the general public as well as hon. Members confidence that we would not be subject to creeping encroachment of powers by the Commission. There is a legitimate suspicion that that has already occurred.

We must also decide what should not be within the competence of the Community. If we follow the definition provided by *The Economist*, there are certain matters that should always remain the subject of local or national control—for example, health, education and transport, except where that relates to inter-Community transport. We should retain control over social issues, such as the number of hours worked and rates of pay. There should be no minimum wages for us, let alone restrictions on part-time workers, worker directors and all the rest of the claptrap that we have had from Madam Papandreou.

We should say a firm no to the proposals to extend Community competence to social affairs, but we should agree to increase the powers of the European Parliament. It should be empowered to control the activities of the Commission and it should have the right to initiate

legislation in certain matters which are subject to unanimity voting—not majority voting—in the Council of Ministers. That would reassure those who are concerned about this issue.

Subsidiarity should be strictly defined in the treaty and it should not be subject to definition by the European Court of Justice in the event of disputes. I do not believe that 12 non-elected judges should have the competence to decide on something of vital national importance to a member state. We should consider seriously the suggestion made by some hon. Members, the Gaullists and the Irish, for a second chamber—a senate, composed of members of national Parliaments. They could decide on subsidiarity disputes. I accept that that chamber could do other things as well, but its primary role should be as an arbitrator. Such a body would be much more sensitive to the concerns of member states than non-elected judges in the European Court of Justice.

There is much more that I would like to say, but time prevents me from doing so. We need to have a vision of a much more united Europe, but that should not be accompanied by a great give-away of power.

I am concerned about the Opposition's new enthusiasm for everything European. They believe that that means that they can get socialism through by the back door, but all it means is that they have become Mr. Delors' poodle.

The Liberal party—I am sorry to see that, once again, it is not represented in the Chamber——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): It is past its bedtime.

Mr. Butterfill: I am sorry about that. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has adopted the puppy-dog tendency: he and his party roll over to have their tummies tickled every time they are invited to do so by a bureaucrat in Brussels.

11.17 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): This will be a marathon debate by modern standards, but it will not be as lengthy as the five-day debate in 1971 on the decision to enter the EC. However, that was before my time.

Today's important debate centres on a crucial issue facing the country. One major change from the circumstances of 1971 is the sheer speed and scale of current events. Today, nothing is set in stone. Every day old certainties disappear. We must not allow ourselves to believe that the decisions taken today represent the last word. The processes may be irreversible, but their direction will not be marked out easily. We are in that process now—at its heart—directing, not following it. That is what the debate should be about.

It is right that those who have doubts about British entry into any political, monetary or economic union and what signing up to that union would mean should have the opportunity to spell them out. Those who are hostile or opposed to such union should have the opportunity to tell the people about the pitfalls, risks and constraints involved in signing up for more progress towards a European central bank and, eventually, a single currency. They have done so in this debate and will continue to do so tomorrow. For some of them, it will become a lifetime's crusade as self-motivating as that of the well-known gent who patrols Oxford street in sandwich boards proclaiming that society's ills come from the fact that protein breeds excess passion.

This is a democracy and opponents of political, economic and monetary union can have their say and outline their case. The right hon. Members for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) have all made it clear that they are opposed to the principle of a single currency and a European central bank. But precisely where the Prime Minister stands on that principle is still not clear. Although he was asked this afternoon, no answer was forthcoming.

But—it is an important "but"—in British democratic terms, those who parade the downsides so eloquently and in such detail and relish cataloguing the doom on which we are about to embark have a duty to their fellow country men and women: they must spell out the alternative. If they seek to persuade the electorate that a magical, unrestrained alternative world is out there ready for us to join and continue to preach that, if we opt out of this dangerous foreign adventure, national independence of action—genuine independent sovereignty in political and economic policy—will be available to us, and if they continue to ignore and contradict the relentless and far from recent process of interlocking economies, money markets and political decisions and their effects, they offer only an illusion, a grotesque fiction, of a future for Britain in the world today.

Opponents should say where we will be and who will be our partners and allies if we use the Government's famous opt-out or opt-in clause in four or five years' time. Who will be with us then in Europe's second or third division? Certainly not the Americans, because, despite the applause rippling across the Atlantic from the lecture halls of Memphis and Chicago to the theme of "Atlantic economic communities", Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker have heaped praise on the new European thirst for integration.

I deeply regret that the right hon. Member for Finchley is not present. She said so much this afternoon about the importance of the voice of this place. I hesitate to say that this is the second time that I have wound up a debate in which the right hon. Member for Finchley made a dramatic impact, and it is the second time that she has missed the winding up. I just hope that it is nothing personal. I hope that someone will remind her that it is discourteous to the House to miss wind-up speeches. I hope that she will read my speech in *Hansard*.

In her absence, the right hon. Lady may care to reflect on the words of James Baker, the United States Secretary of State, who said earlier this year:

> "The European Community has achieved history's most intense and comprehensive voluntary evolution of governing authority above the national level."

That was risky stuff for the right hon. Member for Finchley and pretty risky stuff for the Government. He went on:

> "Thus, the architects of a united Europe have adopted the principle of 'subsidiarity', something like American 'federalism'—that is, the devolution of responsibility to the lowest level of government capable of performing it effectively."

Clearly the American Secretary of State has not been paid to listen to the right hon. Member for Finchley as she trudges around every town in the mid-west for larger and larger fees.

It is surely time that we in Britain faced up to the fact that, whether we like it or loathe it, we are part of the inexorable process of integration, and we must either join it or bump along behind it. If there are any doubters left who wonder whether we as a country can follow the

[Mr. George Robertson]

policies we want, they should look at Austria and Sweden. Those are two proud and prosperous nation states that are both part of the European Free Trade Association, both long-standing neutral countries and both with applications in to join the European Community. If they ever suffered the illusion of being independent of the EC's influence, they do so no longer.

The newly elected right-wing Prime Minister of Sweden, Mr Carl Bildt, stated the obvious when he said on Monday that Sweden was

"determined to converge its economy with the best performing economies of the emerging EMU in all respects considered crucial to the functioning of that Union."

Sweden wants to sign up, as do the rest of the countries in EFTA and beyond in increasing numbers.

Those countries include the nations of central and eastern Europe, which have escaped communism but now see the EC as the model of the sort of economic building blocks that will give their democracies a guaranteed and assured future. All those countries have understood one overriding message: the European Community is the only show in town, and one has to be in it to shape and influence it, and the only alternative is to stand on the fringes and be run by it.

If any other doubters remain, they should look at France—a nation which is every bit as nationalistic as the right hon. Member for Chingford and which has absolutely no intention of conceding even a fragment of its precious national identity. However, it is still enthusiastic to join what we are told is an identity-crushing, centralising nation state. Why is that? The truth is mundane but revealing.

It is not explained merely by the easy theories related to Germany, although we would be wise not to ignore or underestimate the importance of the way other people look at European integration in relation to Germany. I found it offensive when the Chairman of the 1922 Committee earlier today suggested that the process was merely a method for France to tie up Germany, and asked why France did not pay for the binding rope instead of the rest of us. We in Europe are at a time when the apprehensions of Germany's neighbours—which have good historical reasons for being apprehensive—coincide with Germany's sincere wish to reassure them and the world that it is serious about integration, Europe, and being a good partner in a collective future for the continent. Who can say if this time will ever return?

In Britain, with a carelessness that has often bordered on recklessness, the Government have dismissed the importance of Germany's desire to be enfolded in the European embrace. Luckily for us, others have been much more wise.

Mr. Cash: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that it is not impossible that the consequences of monetary union could be to hand over the key of the legal structure of the EC to those countries obviously dominated by Germany?

Mr. Robertson: I am reminded of the words of our good friend, Gregor Mackenzie, who in a legendary intervention once said to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) that the only thing that the hon. Lady and he had in common was that neither of them knew what she was talking about. I feel in precisely the same position, and am beginning to realise why the Tory Whips turned out so many people the other night in order to place the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) in a position which has meant that he has had to sit through all this debate. That is the man who retired from the Cabinet to see more of his family. He is now afflicted with 10-hour debates on Europe. There is a prize!

The French are not ceding sovereignty to Europe. Instead, they are trying to get some back. They are not surrendering their identity, their institutions and their statehood. They are wrenching back a little of what has already gone to the Bundesbank, to Frankfurt and to the driving, dominating and strongest economy in Europe. They recognise what so many of the doubters in the United Kingdom will not face, which is that the choices for them and for Britain are shared sovereignty or no sovereignty, shared influence in Europe or no influence in Europe, and shared power or no power at all. Those are the choices, but I do not know how they would be set out on a referendum ballot paper. Unfortunately, we do not have with us this evening the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Morgan: Not unfortunately.

Mr. Robertson: Or fortunately, as the case may be. The right hon. Gentleman may be concocting more instant policy. I do not expect my good friend, the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), to defend the amazing new idea about a referendum that has come from his party, which used to be so in favour of Europe. It strikes me that never has so much been changed by so few for so little.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman knows that I agree with much of what he has said. I am not frightened of the change in his party's policy. I wonder, however, whether he is frightened about some people who are closer to home. What is his view as a Scot of the philosophy and policy of many of his compatriots, especially those who are supporters of the Labour party, who would much prefer Scotland to be dealing directly with Europe? Is he in favour of that policy?

Mr. Robertson: Why should we not deal directly with Europe? Why should a Scottish Parliament, which will be set up by the future Labour Government, not deal directly with Europe? If it is good enough for the federal German länder, surely it is good enough for Scotland and for other parts of the United Kingdom. If I give way to the hon. Lady in future, I hope that she will not damage my future career by suggesting that she agrees with me.

This has been a remarkable debate. Perhaps it was made amazing after the contribution this afternoon of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley. When she made allusions to "her" Government and "her" Foreign Secretary, the Government's position appeared to change. The Prime Minister, who earlier had been resolute—almost absolute—in his condemnation of a referendum, allowed his spokespeople in Downing street this evening to clarify the constitutional issue. It is, of course, possible that a referendum could take place in a future Parliament.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I think that I have given way too often already.

Mr. Favell: The hon. Gentleman has not given way to me.

Mr. Robertson: I have not, and I have no intention of doing so. A man with the hon. Gentleman's sense of timing could perhaps resume his seat for a little longer.

The choice is that of shared power or no power. It is a simple choice, but it is not an empty one. The power that we share is in our own tomorrow too. It is within institutions that we can participate to preserve our best and to leave the rest in the Community. It is a shared influence to mould Europe in our style and our way for our people, and also for the people of Europe. Britain now has to decide its place in the inevitable, unavoidable and inescapable new Europe in which we now live. The Government know that it is all unavoidable too.

The right hon. Member for Blaby, who will no doubt put in a star performance tomorrow, set out the issue with his usual blunt frankness last week in the *Evening Standard*——

Mr. Cash: Appeaser.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman has allowed failure to go to his head. It would be wise to say it. When there was talk about a single currency, there was no talk about William Cash.

The former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby, was quoted in the *Evening Standard* this week as saying:

"In these circumstances a crude 'No' to the EMU Treaty would be pointless, since it would not stop the others from proceeding with a separate treaty without us, using the EMS agreement as a precedent."

His predecessor as Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), also said that this afternoon.

But the real problem for the nation is that the Government do not have the vaguest clue about what they really want from Europe. That is why the Government's motion talks about

"preserving the right of Parliament to decide at a future date whether to adopt a single currency".

Strangely, it does not say one word about the imposition of a single currency, which was the slogan so regularly used by the Government to protect any lack of policy.

Of course, that never did make any sense anyway, since nothing can be imposed upon any Government or people, but it served for a moment or two to hide the cracks in the Conservative party. But that was until the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East, who at least had the decency to apologise for being absent for this part of the debate, blew the gaffe in last Tuesday's *Financial Times*, as he did this afternoon, when he said:

"Mr. Major, understandably, has maintained our stand against the 'imposition' of a single currency. But that, in a way, never was the central question."

Too true, it was not, but it is a pretty late confession to come now.

We know—of course we know—that the Government will sign up to the EMU treaty on 10 December. It is just that we do not know, and we have not been told, why they are going to do it and what the consequences will be. We have an opt-out clause which, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said, will simply create instability and uncertainty in industry and put a brake on inward investment. If they can get away with it, they have no intention of using it at all and we will be in the EMU without even a whimper.

But even at this stage, on the brink of signing the treaty, the Government cannot summon the guts to tell the people the cost and benefits of it or how Britain can measure up to it lest they irritate the flat earthers on the Benches behind them. Given the feebleness of the economy and the glaring absence of any plans to make Britain strong again, it is small wonder that they have now turned with renewed paranoia to the political union IGC.

By no stretch of the imagination is the political union IGC a blueprint for a European super-state. The British people are too intelligent to believe that kind of kidology anyway. They know that a single European market cannot be created by a process of majority voting on a huge range of industrial, commercial and business decisions and then go on to start to create a monetary union with a European central bank and one currency and then say that we do not need to develop institutions to deal with the new set-up.

That is what the rather ill-named political union IGC is all about—a step-by-step development of political institutions which will keep the Community democratic, accountable and effective. It will have, first, to be a wider Community with new members from EFTA and ultimately from central and eastern Europe as well.

Mr. Cash: Ultimately.

Mr. Robertson: Of course, ultimately. It has to be ultimately. They could not come in tomorrow, and they would not want to come in tomorrow on those terms. But the Government have still not said an official word about the application from Austria, which was submitted formally a year ago.

It will have to be a more democratic Community, where the powers already ceded by national Parliaments will be accountable not only to Ministers sitting and voting in secret, but to directly elected representatives of the people in the European Parliament. A veto on Council decisions taken by majority vote reinforces and does not detract at all from the say of national Parliaments.

The European Parliament must also have the power to bring the European Commission to account. We know that the Prime Minister agrees, but there has hardly been a word said about how that will happen, and it is not even mentioned in the Government's motion. It will also have to be a more balanced Community in which the social dimension involving people is given the same priority as creating a borderless market place.

Alone among all the 11 other Governments—left-wing, right-wing, centre of the road—the British Government stand opposed to the social charter and the legislation that would make it meaningful. That point was strongly made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). Can anyone explain why it was not selling out to Brussels when the Government surrendered the veto on hundreds of single market laws, but that somehow it is an affront to national interests to eliminate the veto on social and environmental affairs?

It must also be an outward-looking Community, conscious of its responsibilities to its neighbours in the east, whose economic and social instability is now the main threat to our own security; and of the countries of the southern hemisphere, which look to our rich trading bloc to relieve their infinitely greater economic plight.

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It must be a fairer Community, based on subsidiarity —a word that means decisions being taken at the lowest appropriate level—including locally and regionally, as well as nationally and European. It must be a Europe in which its social partners are intimately involved in how programmes are to be implemented.

That political agenda for the new Europe is not copyright, and it is not in any way sinister. It is not new, but Labour helped to create it. We will soon be able to implement it.

11.41 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) ended his speech on a fine, rousing note, but we heard from him a not unfamiliar tale. This is the eighth debate on this great subject in which I have taken part in the past two and a half years, and in many of them, I have been sitting opposite the hon. Member for Hamilton.

During that time, I have held a number of different jobs, reflecting the flexible approach to the labour market that my party has—but the hon. Member for Hamilton has been in the same job. He spent the earlier part as Labour's token pro-European, and over the years he has become gradually more cheerful, as he has seen his party catch up with him at breakneck speed. It now seems to have overtaken him—that is, if one could penetrate the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition at the beginning of the debate—but judging by the sound of the speeches by many Labour Members that followed, the message had not penetrated to most of them. No one has persuaded them of the breakneck rush to full-blown union for which the hon. Member for Hamilton has argued for some time, and for which the Leader of the Opposition argues now, somewhat incoherently.

Most of Labour's Back Benchers still live in the days of outright opposition to the Single European Act, when so many members of the shadow Cabinet and other Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen voted in straightforward opposition to that important step forward in European integration. The Government took that step, and the legislation went through Parliament, but Labour —which now claims to be so pro-European—opposed it outright.

The hon. Member for Hamilton addressed the issue of a referendum, and I am sorry that I missed his earlier point of order on that aspect. Perhaps I can make the position clear. It ought to be perfectly clear, and I am surprised that the hon. Member for Hamilton made such a fuss about it.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made perfectly clear, the Government do not intend to hold a referendum on the outcome of the Maastricht negotiations. That, indeed, was not the proposition advanced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher): she proposed a referendum in 1996. Surely it is not particularly startling to suggest that this Government, and this Parliament, cannot decide on such an issue now. It is not a matter to be resolved now; I personally see no need to do so, and neither does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Until Opposition Members lowered the tone slightly, this was an important debate, and it is important for us to take it seriously.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My constituents are very worried about the profound changes faced by a number of customs clearance agents and freight forwarders in the constituency—perhaps 2,000—as a result of alterations to the Single European Act, and the single market proposals. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Government will continue, at European meetings, to do all in their power to ensure that the effect of those changes is eased for my constituents? Can he also confirm that the Government will continue to examine ways in which their effect can be mitigated to help those working in the industry?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend has pressed that cause tenaciously and to great effect, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury has listened carefully to what he has said. We recognise that the changes will have an impact on customs agents and freight forwarders, and the Government have been consulting their representatives closely.

Important contributions have been made to today's debate from both sides of the House: by, for instance, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley; my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe); the right hon. Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn); my right hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and for Worthing (Mr. Higgins); the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies); and my right hon. Friends the Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell). It has been an extremely important and serious debate; and the theme that has emerged has supported the view expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, in these negotiations that matter so much to the House of Commons, we should negotiate hard and positively and seek to build a better Europe.

That means being able to read the fine print—something that the Labour party has been remarkably reluctant to do as it has bashed around Europe signing every Euro-declaration that it can find, and then seeking to deny the terms of what it has signed. It also means—as my right hon. Friend pointed out—being ready to say no as well as yes.

Since the IGCs were set up, we have established our own objectives, many of which are being met. One of those objectives was to ensure that the Community emerged from the negotiations as a better organisation—a more effective and efficient body. We all know that it is by no means a perfectly functioning organisation at present. The measures that we have set out have not been given much high-profile media attention, because they are not particularly glamorous or especially controversial; none the less they are important, and there are good prospects that, if agreement can be reached in December, it will include serious and substantial reforms that are profoundly in the interests of the Community, and greatly to the benefit of Britain as a serious and law-abiding member state of that Community.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister address himself to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)—and by me, twice—about additionality and attribution? It matters to a great many of our constituents.

Bruce Millan is usually right about these matters; he has had 25 years' experience. In his considered opinion, the

Community lawyers are right; and you can bet your boots that we are not going to get the money. That matters to a heck of a lot of people.

Mr. Maude: It matters quite a lot to me as well, because my constituency is one of those affected. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will go to Brussels and urge his colleague, Bruce Millan, to stop withholding money that is properly due to the British people. If he can use his well-known persuasive powers in that direction, he will, for once, do something useful. I hope that he will do that.

I referred to our proposals for securing much better implementation and much better compliance with European Community law and for entrenching, as we hope we can, the principle of subsidiarity in a way that binds, and also to our proposals for much better financial management and accountability within the European Community. If we can achieve all those objectives—we are hopeful that we can—we shall have a Community that respects the same standards of efficiency and value for money as the British Government have for many years.

We want, as a result of this Government's initiative and persuasion in the intergovernmental conferences, a Community that will take better decisions and that will carry them out better. Our proposals are sensible, practical, perhaps workaday and unromantic, but rather important if the Community is to command respect.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will talk at greater length tomorrow about economic and monetary union, but the draft treaty, as has been made clear, divides the economic and monetary union process into two very clear and separate compartments—stage two and stage three. The draft treaty lists the articles that apply in stage two and those that apply in stage three. They involve very different institutional arrangements and different allocations of responsibility between the Community and national Governments. In particular, there is a sharp distinction when it comes to monetary policy. In stage two, monetary policy will be a national responsibility. We argued that that. We prevailed.

There must be no confusion of responsibilities. Interest rates in the United Kingdom must continue to be set in the United Kingdom. There will be a degree of co-ordination of monetary policies, just as there is now, both within the Community and in other bodies such as the Group of Seven. The governors of the central banks of the Twelve will continue to meet to discuss matters of common concern and, where appropriate, to issue opinions.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will no doubt continue to discuss monetary matters with his Finance Minister colleagues in the Council of Ministers, but at the end of the day he alone will be responsible in stage two for monetary policy decisions in the United Kingdom—and responsible to this House.

In other areas of economic policy, there will also be co-ordination. The Finance Ministers will discuss economic developments in the Community and in the member states. The process of convergence will be fostered by multilateral surveillance of member states' economic policies, as happens now.

Some hon. Members have suggested that stage two might bring a host of new commitments and new obligations for the Government and that their freedom of action would thus be undermined. That is not so. In stage two, member states would have to submit to the Community multi-annual convergence programmes. They have already agreed to do so. In stage two, the Economic and Finance Council will be able to comment publicly on the economic performance of a particular member state. It can already do so. Only last week, ECOFIN considered a report on economic policy in Italy.

In stage two, the Council will be able to make specific recommendations to particular member states. Under the Council decision on convergence, agreed unanimously early in 1990, the Council can already make such recommendations. The Council's recommendations are not and will not be binding on a member state. The right of this House to determine fiscal policy would not be affected. The power to make recommendations has existed since 1974. It is not an innovation.

It has been suggested that, in stage two, member states would be forced to curb their fiscal policies so as to avoid running an excessive deficit. The relevant text of the treaty and the related protocol are still under negotiation, but as the text stands, no provisions would allow the Council to enforce changes in fiscal policy on member states.

We should be clear about what is envisaged. The treaty provides for the Community to examine the budgetary positions of member states whose deficits appear to be excessive and to decide whether a deficit is such as to be regarded as a gross error of policy. The Council can then issue policy recommendations. That is as far as it can go under stage two. That, again, is not new; it already has this power.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Who decides whether the deficits are excessive, and are there any definitions of "excessive"?

Mr. Maude: There are no definitions under stage two. The decision is made by the Council. The protocol sets out some reference values, which are still subject to negotiation, but only for member states that participate in stage three. The Council's power to issue policy recommendations under stage two has been in existence since the convergence decision in 1974. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) may have played some part in that decision. He is shaking his head and pleading not guilty, but he may know something about its origins.

Under stage three, the Council will have no greater power over member states that have exemption status. The latest draft treaty gives the Council power to instruct a member state participating in stage three to reduce its deficit and to impose sanctions if it does not do so. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said earlier, we believe that the most effective sanctions are imposed by the market, and we shall continue to argue that in the IGC.

Some hon. Members have argued that the distinction between stages two and three cannot be maintained. They fear either that we are committed to move to stage three or that, irrespective of the provision in the treaty allowing us a free choice, we would none the less be obliged to move. We are still negotiating, but let it be perfectly clear that we shall not accept a text that involves such a commitment. The reference to a single currency in the opening articles of the draft treaty is explicitly qualified by the reference to the procedures set out therein, and those procedures include the right to opt for exemption status. If the procedures are acceptable—we are clear that they must be—the opening articles are also acceptable.

It has been suggested that, once we had accepted stage two, there would be intense and irresistible pressure to move to stage three. That has been described as the

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"slippery slope" argument. I was interested in the argument of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), that, if convergence is achieved, a single currency is not necessary. That may be true, and it might affect the balance of advantage and disadvantage, but it does not need to be resolved at this stage.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) asked what would happen to the pound if the United Kingdom were exempt from stage three. The answer is straightforward: the exchange-rate mechanism would continue, run by the enlarged chamber of governors, and all currencies that were not in stage three could remain in the exchange-rate mechanism or outside it, depending on what they chose. That applies equally to eastern European states that become members of the European Community in the meantime. There are no provisions in the treaty that would exclude them from taking part in it.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister opened the debate, he made it clear that he had sensed right the mood of the House and of the British people. They want the Government to be in the heart of Europe, negotiating positively and effectively not only for British interests but for a better Europe. That means a Europe in which national Governments retain the power to make proposals and in which national Parliaments retain their powers.

How different that is from the Labour party's position —it wants to lead according to the principle which states that where others go must be right. That is like the motto of the famous French revolutionary leader who said, "I am their leader; I must follow them."

How little the Opposition have thought about the issue. They want to commit themselves to a single currency and to deny a future Parliament or Government the power to make a vital decision. They say that they want real convergence and decisions in the treaty for which no one else in the Community has argued at any stage. They continue to argue for what no one else is prepared to offer and they are wholly isolated in a fantasy world. They claim to be nearer than us to the European consensus, but they are as far from reality as they ever were.

It being Twelve o'clock, the debate stood adjourned, pursuant to Order [19 November.]

Debate to be resumed this day.

Rape Case (Criminal Investigation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

12 midnight

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to make known my deep concern about the circumstances surrounding the brutal rape of a constituent of mine, who will be known as Mrs. X, about the way in which the criminal investigation was conducted and about certain matters relating to the horrible affair. I wish to ask the Minister a number of questions about such cases. Incidentally, I shall use the name Mary as a double blind in the sense that none of the woman's family or friends knows her as Mary.

I believe that the victims of sexual assault, of child abuse and/or sexual abuse should be treated in a decent, compassionate and sympathetic manner during the criminal investigation of such allegations. The compassionate and sensitive treatment should not harm the search for sound forensic and other evidence. Prejudice and bias have no place in the scheme of things. The Minister knows my views on such matters when they might affect service personnel and families. In every case involving armed forces personnel and their families, the benchmark must be the best practices found in civil society. An example of what I mean can be found in Strathclyde, where in every division of the police force there is a well-established female and child unit, staffed principally by female officers who are well trained and highly experienced in interviewing skills and techniques in cases involving sexual assault, child abuse and/or sexual abuse.

When dealing with previous Bills affecting the armed services, the Minister and his colleagues have always sought to assure me that the armed forces are keenly aware of the need to treat complainers—irrespective of age—in a sympathetic manner. My first question to the Minister, who is apprised of the case, is whether he is satisfied that Mrs. X and her husband were treated with compassion.

In the summer, I received a letter from Mrs. X which disturbed me greatly. She wrote:

"I am writing to you in the hope that you can help me with the injustice which has occurred.

On 16th February 1991 whilst my husband was serving in the Gulf on Operation Granby, I was invited to attend a function at the Corporals Mess"—

in a particular regiment which, of course, I shall not mention—

"which I did attend with some of my friends. I enjoyed the function and my friends kept me in good cheer as I was obviously anxious about my husband being in the Gulf and did have a few too many drinks. I also had a plaster of Paris cast on my leg (which had been injured in a fall some weeks before) and consequently had some difficulty in walking. I was put on the Regimental Mini Bus which was run purely to ferry married personnel to their married quarters after functions. I arrived at my quarter at what time I do not know due to me being very intoxicated and when I awoke some hours later I discovered the following".

I am quoting verbatim as you would expect, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

"1. My blouse had been unbuttoned.

2. My bra had been forced over my breasts.

3. My underwear had been removed and left torn in half on my bed.

4. My trousers had been removed with some force as my right leg was in a great deal of pain around the cast.

I then tried to deduce the events of the previous night and discovered some time later that I had been raped by force by XYZ who had been on the mini bus and followed me home. I went to the medical centre and there a male doctor did a very degrading examination of my body. The investigator from the . . . Special Investigation Branch obtained the following statement from XYZ. He had whilst I was lying intoxicated on my bed in my quarter had oral sex, had masturbated over my body and had entered my vagina for about 10 seconds. I was assured by the SIB that there would be a court martial and XYZ would be charged with rape but that did not happen, he was charged only with being in the married quarter area, fined 14 days wages and demoted in rank to Trooper.

So dear Dr. Godman I feel I have been treated badly in this case and would be grateful if you would pursue this matter further. I have listed the facts to assist you:

1. I asked for my husband to be returned from the Gulf but this was not possible due to the ground war beginning.

2. I asked for my Mother to be brought from the UK to give me comfort in my husband's place, it took 3 weeks for this to happen.

3. The investigator of the SIB assured me that the evidence obtained from XYZ, written and recorded, warranted a court martial.

4. I asked for professional counselling which I didn't get."

Mrs. X goes on to list a number of complaints.

I wrote to Mrs. X to inform her that I would take her case up with Ministers at the Ministry of Defence. In a letter to the Secretary of State, I outlined my deep concern over the case and over the way in which the allegation by Mrs. X had been investigated.

In reply, the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces gave me certain assurances. He said, for example, that the matter had been

"thoroughly investigated by the Special Investigation Branch of the Royal Military Police. In accordance with normal regulations, their final report was forwarded to the Commanding Officer who sought legal advice on its findings. Legal advice recommended that, as Mrs. X was unable to remember anything of the alleged incident and that, as it may not be possible to prove beyond reasonable doubt that, not only did she not consent, but also that XYZ knew that she was not consenting, the case should be dealt with summarily by the Commanding Officer."

The Minister also said that the medical examination had been carried out in a sympathetic and professional manner.

I sent a copy of the Minister's letter to Mrs. X and she responded a few days later on 20 October. She wrote:

"Thank you for your letter dated 9th October 1991 which I have read with great dismay. You were right in saying that the minister Earl of Arran has disappointed me to no end. I find it very hard to understand that if a person who admits to having raped a person can get away with it. On his admission to a policeman in civilian life no doubt that person would be convicted of rape.

Yet in the army, a person who admits to having raped a married woman whilst her husband was fighting to preserve peace can get away with it.

I am now pursuing civil legal action and if need be publish it in my local daily paper and some other well known daily papers. The army has a lot to answer for. I intend to uncover the old boy system where everybody covers up when cases like this arise. Who knows how many women have had the same ordeal as myself? No wonder no woman ever comes forward to seek help if this is the sort of justice the army say it is. And because I was drunk and can't remember anything about my ordeal, does that give him the right to do what he did to me? So if all women are drunk and are raped then the person doing indecent assault has no case to answer to."

I sincerely hope that Mrs. X's complaint was not treated in a dismissive way because, as she readily admitted, she was drunk at the time of the assault. I know that the hand that rocks the cradle is supposed to be steady 24 hours a day, but that does not always hold. No woman should be treated in a certain way simply because she was drunk when she suffered an assault.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

Mrs. X mentioned in her letter that she was giving thought to taking civil legal action, so I sought advice on private prosecutions from both the Attorney-General, for such actions in England, and the Lord Advocate, for similar cases in Scotland. Both offered only circumspect answers. The Attorney-General said in response to a parliamentary question on Tuesday 19 November:

"The information is not readily available. I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible."

In a letter dated 19 November, the Lord Advocate said that in Scotland

"Civil actions are raised in the Court of Session or Sheriff Court . . . Mrs. . . . would have to establish first of all that she does indeed have a right to raise an action arising from the unfortunate incident of which she has complained. She would probably have the right to do so in the court in Germany which would have jurisdiction in relation to the place where the events happened, assuming that German law recognises the ground of action contemplated. A court in the United Kingdom might have jurisdiction if the alleged perpetrator was domiciled here because of the provisions of the Civil Jurisdictions and Judgments Act 1982."

That Act also determined the next question—whether the action should be brought in England or Scotland.

Everyone in Scotland knows of the famous Glasgow case involving a female complainer who took out a private prosecution in such a case. The case will be keenly remembered by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who was the principal Law Officer for Scotland at the time.

I readily acknowledge that I cannot expect definitive statements from the Minister when the answers given by his ministerial colleagues, who have greater legal experience than the Minister and I possess, are, to say the least, somewhat circumspect. I must also acknowledge to the Minister and the House that I have been unable to interview my constituent face to face. Our exchanges have been by telephone or Royal Mail, so I readily acknowledge that there may be some problems there. Nevertheless, in my view, Mrs. X has been shabbily treated in what I can only call a squalid affair.

I seek the help of the Minister with some questions. Will he explain why the perpetrator of the offence is to be allowed to return to the base where Mrs. X's husband is stationed and where she lives? Mrs. X told me in a telephone conversation today that the acting commanding officer and the warrant officer, who is the family officer, have informed her that the man is to return within the next two weeks. I appeal to the Minister: the man should not be allowed to return to his unit; he should remain where he is at this moment.

In cases of this nature, is the victim, following the successful prosecution of the accused person, advised about financial compensation? Does a member of the armed forces serving in the United Kingdom or overseas, or a member of his or her family, have the right, where appropriate, to seek compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board? If armed services personnel and members of their families have that legal right, are they made aware of it by their commanding officers?

Is the Minister confident that the counselling services offered to someone in such circumstances are of the highest quality? Does it equal the counselling that a woman can obtain in Scotland, England, Wales, or indeed Ulster? Is the Minister confident that medical officers carry out only one examination in each case, and is it conducted in a highly skilled and compassionate manner?

What practical advice could the armed forces offer to someone who contemplated taking out a private prosecution? Could that person obtain advice from people in the armed forces who have legal training, or could the armed forces obtain that sort of advice for the person seeking it? Will the Minister give me an assurance that Mrs. X was not discriminated against because, by her honest admission, she was drunk when she was assaulted?

I sought this Adjournment debate in the hope that Mrs. X and her husband could find peace of mind and could somehow be helped to strengthen their marriage. They have suffered a terrible ordeal, and it is my sincere hope that they will find the peace of mind that they so richly deserve.

I have mentioned the Gulf war. While I was opposed to that operation, I have the highest respect for our armed forces personnel, and—for rather quaint reasons—I have great sympathy and respect for members of the Royal Military Police.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Why is that?

Dr. Godman: I shall make no confessions.

My constituent, Mrs. X, who is still suffering badly, had been treated in a less than fair way by those who conducted the criminal investigation and also by those who decided that there were no grounds for bringing the perpetrator in front of a court martial. I seek those assurances from the Minister.

12.18 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has been successful in securing this Adjournment debate. I know that the hon. Member has shown considerable interest in the case that is the subject of the debate, although I find it surprising that he has chosen to raise the matter in this way.

As he has outlined, the details of the case are extremely delicate and sensitive and, considering some of the descriptions of the case that he has given, it seems extraordinary that he chose to raise the matter on the Floor of the House. He could quite easily have asked to meet me or my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces—with whom he has been corresponding, as he said—at the Ministry of Defence, where we could have discussed the matter in a more suitable environment.

Notwithstanding, we are debating the matter on the Floor of the House and I shall have to go into some matters of delicacy in my response.

This is an emotive case, which has been subject to a full investigation by the special investigation branch of the Royal Military Police, and disciplinary action has been taken against the soldier in relation to the allegations. The charge was supported by the evidence collected by the Royal Military Police inquiries. As the hon. Gentleman has said, Mrs. X has indicated that she may be taking proceedings further, so it would be most improper for me to go into too much detail on this case. Having said that, I feel that there are significant aspects that should be brought out in order to put the matter in perspective.

As the hon. Gentleman has stated, Mrs. X, by her own admission, was very drunk. On more than one occasion she has admitted to being very intoxicated and I understand that she has stated that she had consumed about 24 single measures of dry Martini and lemonade, together with some white wine. It is perhaps not surprising that her recollections of that evening are vague. Indeed, the case against the soldier involved rests primarily on his evidence, not hers.

Once Mrs. X had made her allegations, there followed a full investigation by the special investigation branch, Royal Military Police, which included a full medical examination. I can confirm that, although the medical examination was clearly an unpleasant experience for Mrs. X, it was in accordance with the regulations and was conducted with kindness and sympathy throughout. Indeed, the examining doctor was a registered medical practitioner—a reservist called up in the course of the Gulf conflict. The examination was conducted in the presence of a female nurse and a female member of the Royal Military Police. As we know, the whole indignity that women have to go through for these examinations is, of necessity, I am afraid, an unpleasant experience. In this case, as in all cases, the examination was done with as much sympathy as can be shown.

When the case was presented to the commanding officer of the unit involved, he sought advice from the appropriate Army legal branch, which advised what charges, if any, were supported by the evidence. I should almost like to repeat that. It is important that we do not get away from the fact that, when any charge is laid, there must be evidence that will hold up for convicting somebody of that charge. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that a similar role is undertaken by the Crown prosecution service in criminal proceedings, and I am sure that he will agree that it is right and proper that such an independent assessment of the facts should take place. This independent assessment results in a judgment being made about the likelihood, based on that evidence, of a court finding a case proved beyond reasonable doubt.

Clearly in this case, where both parties were, by their own admission, drunk and unable to remember fully the events that took place, the commanding officer was placed in a very difficult position. The forensic evidence did not support a charge of rape or any other assault. What evidence there was supported a relatively minor charge under military standing orders and the soldier concerned was charged, found guilty and punished under the powers accorded to the commanding officer. Mrs. X and the hon. Member are aware of the nature of this punishment. By the same token that we do not want to be able to identify Mrs. X, it would not be appropriate for me to reveal the exact nature of either the charge or the punishment received by the soldier.

This is a most regrettable incident, but I cannot accept a charge that the Army did not take the allegations seriously and that the full and thorough investigation was not conducted in anything but a professional and sympathetic manner.

The hon. Gentleman pointed out that the soldier returned at one point when Mrs. X and her husband were still at the base. That was covered in the letter sent to the hon. Gentleman by my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 28 August. The hon. Gentleman will see that the letter says:

"In the interests of all parties",

the soldier

"was posted . . . following this incident. It was unfortunate that he returned for a short time but this was necessary in order for him to complete training prior to deploying on an operational tour."

The reasoning behind that was explained to Mrs. X and her husband.

I am afraid that the circumstances of the case—two people who were extremely drunk and who have a very hazy understanding of what went on—make it difficult for any charge to have any validity. In those circumstances, I believe that the military pursued this with all the diligence that they could. I regret that they were unable to pursue the matter any further.

None of us knows what happened on that occasion, and it is sad that the participants cannot remember, either.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 28 November.

MOTIONS FOR UNOPPOSED RETURNS

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered, for Session 1990-91 of—

(1) the total number of Questions to Ministers or other Members which stood on the Order Paper, distinguishing those set down for oral, written priority and written answer respectively, the number of days upon which replies to Questions for oral answer were given in the House; and the total number of Questions for oral answer to which such answers were given in the House;

(2) the total number of Notices of Motions given for an early day;

(3) the number of Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct), showing separately the orders given in the House and those given in Committee; and the Members suspended from the service of the House under Standing Order No. 43 (Order in debate) or otherwise, distinguishing whether the offence was committed in the House or in Committee, the period of such suspension, the number of occasions on which more than one Member was so suspended having jointly disregarded the authority of the Chair, and the number of occasions on which the attention of the House was called to the need for recourse to force to compel obedience to Mr. Speaker's direction; and

(4) the number of public petitions presented to the House distinguishing separately those brought to the Table at the times specified by Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CLOSURE OF DEBATE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME

Return ordered,

for Session 1990-91 of—

(a) applications of Standing Order No. 35 (Closure of debate)—

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(b) applications of Standing Order No. 28 (Powers of Chair to propose question)—

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether in House or Committee	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(c) the number of Bills in respect of which allocation of time orders (distinguishing where appropriate orders supplementary to a previous order) were made under Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of Time to Bills), showing in respect of each Bill—

(i) the number of sittings allotted to the consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee by any report of a Business Sub-Committee under Standing Order No. 103 (Business sub-committees) agreed to by the Standing Committee, and the number of sittings of the Standing Committee pursuant thereto; and

(ii) the number of days or portions of days allotted by the allocation of time order and any supplementary order to the consideration of the Bill at any stage in the House or in committee, together with the number of days upon which proceedings were so taken in the House or in committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Return ordered,

for Session 1990-91 of—

(A) the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and those for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute (1) laid before the House; and (2) considered by the Joint Committee and Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, setting out the grounds on which Instruments may be drawn to the special attention of the House under Standing Order No. 124 (Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)) and specifying the number of Instruments so reported under each of these grounds; and

(B) The numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House

respectively, showing the number where the Question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Private Bills and Private Business

Return ordered, for Session 1990-91 of—

(1) the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House, and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed, specifying also the dates of the House's consideration of the several stages of such Bills;

(2) all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated by the House or partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

(3) all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on unopposed Bills, together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

(4) the number of Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, distinguishing those proceeded with under section 7 and under section 9 respectively; specifying, in the case of Bills proceeded with under section 9 against which petitions were deposited, whether a motion was made to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee, and if so whether such motion was agreed to, withdrawn, negatived or otherwise disposed of; and stating for each Joint Committee to which a Bill was referred the names of the Members of this House nominated thereto, the first and last day of the Committee's sitting, the number of days on which each Joint Committee sat for the consideration of the Bill referred to it, the number of days on which each Member of the Committee served, and whether the Committee reported that the order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

(5) the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the Committee; and

(6) the membership, work costs and staff of the Court of Referees and the Standing Orders Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Public Bills

Return ordered, for Session 1990-91 of—

The number of Public Bills (other than Bills to confirm Provisional Orders and Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936) distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, showing: (1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and (2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Sittings of the House

Return ordered,

for Session 1990-91 of—

the days on which the House sat; stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; the total numbers of hours occupied in the sittings of the House; and the average time; showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business; and specifying, for each principal type of business before the House, how much time was spent thereon, distinguishing from the total the time spent after the hour appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Special Procedure Orders

Return ordered,

for Session 1990-91 of—

(1) the number of Special Procedure Orders presented, the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders; and

(2) Special Procedure Orders which were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Standing Committees

Return ordered, for Session 1990-91 of—

(1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present; (2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), or Standing Order 102 (European Standing Committees) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered (including, in the case of the Scottish Grand Committee, the number of Meetings held in Edinburgh, pursuant to a motion made under Standing Order No. 94(3) (Scottish Grand Committee)) and the number of Members present at each of those sittings; and (3) the membership, work costs and staff of the Chairmen's Panel.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Select Committees

Return ordered, for Session 1990-91 of—

statistics relating to the membership, work costs and staff of Select Committees (other than the Standing Orders Committee).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Surplus Food and Drink

1. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total volume and value of surplus food and drink stocks in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Community.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): We place volume figures in the Library each month. The latest values are £197 million in the United Kingdom and £2,297 million in the European Community.

Mr. Canavan: As the amount of surplus food is even greater than last year, will the Government ensure that at the forthcoming Maastricht summit a high priority is given to the eradication of the absurd and immoral common agricultural policy? Until that is done, will the Government adopt a more generous attitude towards pensioners and others on low incomes by distributing more of the surplus food to them, especially in the lead-up to the Christmas season?

Mr. Gummer: I note that the hon. Gentleman has signified his opposition to the Labour party's policy of abject surrender to the rest of Europe in a motion that he has signed. He has again pointed to the immense divisions in the Labour party on the subject of Europe. It would have been better if he had understood that this is not a subject for Maastricht. It is under immediate and continual discussion in the European Council of Agriculture Ministers, which is undertaking a wholesale reform of the common agricultural policy. That reform has been demanded by the Government and I intend to ensure that it is to the benefit of farmers, consumers and taxpayers alike.

Mr. Robert Banks: Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that surplus food within the Community and outside is sent as quickly as possible to the Soviet Union and eastern European countries, where there are cases of terrible poverty and a shortage of foodstuffs? I should be grateful if he would do all that he can for them.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to point to the distinction between free enterprise in western Europe, where we have too much food, and to eastern Europe under the socialist system which has too little. We are trying to increase the amount of triangular trade, which enables the former socialist countries of eastern Europe to provide for the needs of the Soviet Union, as they used to do. We shall be funding that through the generous offers of the European Community and the bilateral offers that we have been making.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister agree that the MacSharry proposals, which are supposed to deal with the excesses of the common agricultural policy will, if accepted, breach the legally agreed budgetary guidelines for several years to come? Will the Minister continue to press in the Council for a reduction in commodity price support and in export restitutions? Will he also press for an *increase in* resources diverted to environmental payments? Finally, will he give a firm guarantee to the House that he will veto any agreement that leads to a breach of those budgetary guidelines?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making those points, but I was surprised that he did not put first the fact that my duty is to fight to ensure that British farmers, taxpayers and consumers are not disadvantaged by the MacSharry proposals. The fact that the hon. Gentleman did not include that in his list shows that Labour Members have no interest in British farming and it betrays their total lack of farming policies.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that farmers in this country are pleased by his efforts to encourage triangular trade, thus stopping products from eastern Europe flooding and undermining the market in Britain?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend would agree that we must make greater access available for eastern European products, but that they should be at a price that produces a significant return to enable eastern European countries to uphold the growth in their economies, rather than be used as a source of cheap imports, the profits going to the processors in western Europe. Triangular trade helps in that mix. I still want greater access, but I want it at a price that benefits the economies that we are trying to support.

Ducks

2. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to agree to a meeting to discuss the case of Mr. Johnston, a constituent of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, and the slaughter of his duck flock under Ministry regulations.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I have explained the Ministry's position to the hon. Member in two detailed letters and there would be nothing that I could add at a meeting.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister knows the background to this case. My constituent, Mr. Johnston, lost everything due to a salmonella outbreak on his duck farm. There are legitimate questions that he wishes to pursue about whether the Ministry's policies have been consistent in respect of, first, the Grampian outbreak and, secondly, the outbreak of salmonella at the Kent supplier to the Grampian duck farm. Why has it taken the Ministry seven weeks to reply to my letter asking for a meeting, merely to say no? Is the Minister aware that the replies so far do not satisfy the legitimate questions asked by myself, by my constituent and by the medical officers in Grampian region? Does he acknowledge the right of hon. Members to seek meetings to defend the interests of their constituents? If not, why not?

Mr. Maclean: I often meet hon. Members where there are appropriate issues to discuss. As has already been explained to the hon. Gentleman, the policy has been applied evenly and consistently in this case and his constituent has now gone to arbitration. However, in view of the hon. Gentleman's outrageous comments on the radio this week, I shall be delighted to give a full public

account of our policy and the conditions on Sharnidubs farm and I shall put them on the record in the House if the hon. Gentleman applies for a debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree—Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give notice that I shall raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: As I had already called the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), he had better ask his supplementary question. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I had already called him and he had started his supplementary.

Mr. Walker: Whatever the merit or otherwise of the case in question, does my hon. Friend read into it that the Scottish National party is calling for different standards in Scotland? Are those standards likely to be higher or lower than the standards in England?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) seems to be implying that there is an English duck conspiracy against Scottish ducks. The state veterinary service operates over the whole country and applies even and consistent standards. Many of the excellent Scottish food producers whom I meet are proud that in the United Kingdom standards are among the finest in Europe and they want to keep them that way.

Sugar Beet Growers

3. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from sugar beet growers in Norfolk.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): We are in frequent contact with sugar beet growers about rhizomania.

Mr. Bellingham: The beet growers in my constituency are very happy with the Government's policy on ducks. Is my hon. Friend aware, however, that those beet growers have had a black cloud hanging over their operations in recent years because of the threat of rhizomania? Although, mercifully, there has not been an outbreak this year, a number of farmers have been affected during the last few years, with great consequences for their livelihood and farms. Is not it time that the Government had a comprehensive policy and package for dealing with the problem?

Mr. Curry: The Government have a comprehensive policy, which is to be absolutely categorical in preventing the spread of rhizomania. Had we not held the line last year, we may not have had a test of more than 2,300 samples this year with no results being positive. However, I wish to maintain the flexibility to deal with individual circumstances. We have done that, which is why I am not prepared to lay down a categorical guideline that would hinder my ability to be flexible within the bounds of keeping that disease under control.

Live Animals (Transport)

4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the minimum value system for the transport of horses will be maintained.

15. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the recent agreement in the Agriculture Council on the transport of horses and other animals.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have successfully negotiated in the Agriculture Council the retention of our controls designed to prevent the export of horses and ponies for slaughter. The Council also agreed to return to the issue at a later stage with a view to setting special welfare conditions for all transport of horses in the Community.

Mr. Butler: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that splendid achievement. Will he assure the House that in future he will repel attacks on traditional British practices?

Mr. Gummer: In fact, we have been defending a traditional British non-practice. I should like to extend our attitude towards all animals, especially horses, to other countries in the Community. We have much to learn from them about a number of matters—not least, for example, the way some of them treat children. However, they could learn a great deal from us about how to treat animals, and I intend to take that line continually in the Council.

Mr. Carrington: My right hon. Friend will know that there is still grave concern about how our European Community partners treat animals in their husbandry and farming. Will he ensure that the best practices that are common in this country become European Community policy and enforceable in other European countries?

Mr. Gummer: I am very much encouraged by the number of other countries in the European Community that are beginning to accept our views on those matters. In the meantime, we shall continue to set the example. I hope that those people who press me for higher welfare standards in this country will remember that it costs money. When they buy veal or pigmeat products, I hope that they will remember that they should buy them from the country where standards are the highest.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I congratulate the Minister on his stand and achievements. I am sure that he has read the latest survey from Europe, according to which British farmers are farming at a loss while their counterparts in Holland and Greece are farming at a profit. Why does that happen?

Mr. Gummer: First, it is characteristically kind of the hon. Gentleman to offer his congratulations when they are in order. I much appreciate that. The second half of his question is not necessarily connected with the first. British farming is under considerable pressure at the moment, which is why I am fighting hard against the suggestion that we should discriminate in some way against British farmers, who are characterised in the rest of Europe as being better off than their European partners. That is not so and we must show that family farms in Britain need the same support as family farms elsewhere in Europe.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The Minister will be aware of the excellent resolution that came out of European Standing Committee A, saying that the Government should stand by legislation on the transport of animals. There are 15 pieces of such legislation. Will the Minister assure us that

the resolution, as adopted by the House, is being pursued rigorously in the Council of Ministers? Is the current deal temporary or permanent?

Mr. Gummer: I much appreciate the support that has been given by that Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that, on this specific question, we have managed to get the Community to accept much higher standards on the transport of live animals—much closer to what we stand for—than it ever has. There are still additional points to be discussed before those decisions can be reached, including specific hours, for which we must press. I undertake to the House that I shall continue to make that a very high priority.

I am as yet the only Minister in the Community who takes animal welfare matters seriously. I am increasingly gaining support from our Dutch and German friends and I hope ultimately to have everyone's support. *[Laughter.]* Those who think the subject amusing should remember that animal welfare is of considerable importance to the House, not something about which to make jokes.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks and congratulations of all those who love man's very best friend, the horse, for his protective action on horses——

Mr. Canavan: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Greenway: Man also loves other animals, but his best friend is the horse.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Commission's action is not final? Will he promise the House and the nation that he will not rest until it is guaranteed that minimum values on horses dedicated for export from this country will be preserved and our excellent attitude towards horses and other animals is spread throughout the rest of the Community?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I hope that he knows that I have fought hard on the issue and shall continue to do so, not only to defend our attitude towards animals in Britain, but to spread those attitudes to other countries. I find the nationalistic view that we should defend animals only in this country somewhat odd. As a strong supporter of our membership of the Community, I want to use the basis of our membership to spread more widely our general attitude to animal welfare, which is supported by Conservatives and giggled at by the Opposition.

Fish Lorries

5. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the French Government concerning the blockade of British fish lorries at Boulogne and Dieppe.

Mr. Curry: We have raised the incident of the blockade of a fish lorry with the French authorities. It is just as serious as the interruption of meat exports.

Mr. Foulkes: Was the Minister able to get down to room W6 this morning, as I did, and buy the excellent fish provided by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), which was being sold in aid of Children in Need? If he did, he would be fortified to say to his French counterpart—as I hope he will—that British fishermen are subject to exactly the same European Community rules as French fishermen. Therefore, were there to be another blockade such as that which stopped fish lorries from Ayrshire and Aberdeen without the French force of law and order being mobilised, it would be wholly unacceptable to the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Curry: The answer to the first question is yes. I bought one monkfish and four kippers, to be precise. I am willing to exchange monkfish recipes, but most of mine are French.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point about blockades, whether of fish or meat. French farmers are trying to take away the livelihoods of British farmers and fishermen, instead of getting together to try to sort out the problems that afflict us all. When I next meet him I shall put that point forcefully to the French Minister, as I have in the past.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend make it crystal clear to his counterpart in France that if the French people continue to block our goods, the British people might fight fire with fire by blockading frogs, snails, wine and cheese?

Mr. Curry: A few months ago, I opened a British snail exhibition and I have introduced the English quality wine scheme. It seems that the British people can buy all the products that they want without recourse to French goods.

Fishing Industry

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to discuss matters relating to the future of the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: I have regular meetings with the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, at which we discuss a wide range of subjects.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave guarantees on the dolphins population on 3 June this year. Can the Minister tell us how many dolphins have been killed as a result of drift-netting since 3 June?

Mr. Curry: No, I cannot.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Five.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman did not specify which boats, which drift nets or which ocean, which is why I could not give him a reply. Five were caught through drift-netting by British boats. The hon. Gentleman will know that as a result of the agreement that I reached in the Fisheries Council last month, drift-net fishery will, in practice, cease.

Sir Michael Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that according to the salmon net fisheries report, administrative convenience is by no means an adequate reason for phasing out the north-east drift-net fishermen, whose trade has been pursued for many generations on that part of the coast?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend will know that we published a report on the north-east coast drift-net fishery, which is a different matter from that raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). We

decided on a long-term phase-out because of the difficulty of management of stocks when it is a multi-species catch by drift net. Although it is a long-standing fishery, the introduction of monofilament net has meant a quantum leap in the technology applied to it. There is no threat to the stocks and that is why we decided on a long-term phase-out and said that fishermen would be allowed to finish their current licences. The National Rivers Authority has been invited to submit proposals, including one for a possible increase in fishing attached to the shore.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: On another aspect of the fishing industry and in particular conservation, can the Minister say, following Monday's meeting, what aspect of the eight-day tie-up he is prepared to be flexible about, given the serious threat, financial hardship and dangers that that tie-up is causing to the fishing industry? In advance of the meeting of the Council of Ministers, will he ensure that a constructive debate on the matter takes place with representatives of the fishing industry and that there will be no more childish outbursts from the Minister such as was witnessed recently in Fife?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Lady knows that my door has always been open to the fishing organisations. That will continue to be the case. At the moment we do not have the proposals from Brussels which will go forward to the Fisheries Council in December. There are two important matters. First, we shall clearly need some continuation of effort controls, because conservation is paramount. Secondly, we shall seek significantly more flexibility in the way in which those controls are applied in the event of future controls as a result of the negotiations. By telling people the simple truth—that conservation matters must be taken seriously—my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is merely doing his job effectively.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and I were delighted to see my hon. Friend purchasing kippers and monkfish. As he eats the monkfish over the weekend and perhaps has the kippers tomorrow morning, will he ruminate on the call by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations for a decommissioning scheme? He has written to me and to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby about the case, but the organisation feels that there is a need for such a scheme to bring fishing into balance with the number of vessels.

Mr. Curry: I trust that my wife will cook my monkfish in a way that avoids rumination on the subject—[HON. MEMBERS: "French wife."] Yes, I have a French wife. We have made it clear to the fisheries' organisations that decommissioning could form part of a package, provided that it included long-term effective effort control measures. We have invited them to put such a package to us so that we can discuss it with them. I have already started the conversations and a constructive dialogue is under way. However, I insist that a package must contain effective long-term effort controls that go beyond mesh sizes and the sort of measures agreed recently by the Technical Conservation Council.

Mr. Speaker: I am ruminating on whether fish should be sold in the House of Commons.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister recall that, on 3 June, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food lost his temper with me when I suggested that dolphins could be caught in a long drift net, and denied that that was so? Given his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Minister was wrong? Will he further confirm that, since the Fisheries Council meeting, European fishermen will still be allowed to use long drift nets for another two and a quarter years?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman knows that when I went to the Fisheries Council the objective was to get the French on board. We had to get a deal that would bring all drift netting under control in the Community. Only five British but 60 French boats were involved. Therefore, if we had merely controlled the British fishermen, the majority of damage would have continued to be inflicted by other people. Therefore, we had to bring everyone under the same regulations. We achieved that only, after intervention by the French Prime Minister, by granting a limited extension to boats with a two-year track record in the fisheries. We had to pay the price, but it was a price worth paying because the alternative would have been no control at all, which would have been bad news for conservation, starting with the dolphins.

Beef Industry

7. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new plans he has to improve returns in the beef industry.

Mr. Curry: Returns in the beef sector can be improved only if a better balance between supply and demand is brought about on the market, and producers take positive action to supply what the consumer wants.

Sir John Farr: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, but is he aware of the tremendous concern over the Irishification of British agriculture, and in particular of the despondence over the fact that the most efficient producers have their production capped, which only succeeds in putting up prices to the British housewife? When he next goes to Brussels to see Mr. MacSharry, will my hon. Friend make it clear that his proposals are unacceptable, and will he give real consideration to the possibility of Britain withdrawing altogether from the operation and manipulations of the CAP?

Mr. Curry: On the last point, the United Kingdom is an integral part of the Community, and unilateral withdrawal from one part of it is not a practical policy. My right hon. Friend the Minister and I have said, since the introduction of Mr. MacSharry's proposals, that the idea of introducing capping and limits on what was eligible for repayment was fundamentally hostile to British agriculture. We have made that view apparent from the start, and will continue to do so as forcefully as we conceivably can.

Mr. Corbett: I urge the Minister to take cooking lessons so that he can more properly take a share of household duties. Will he confirm that the best way to improve returns for beef producers is for the Government to give a lead in helping to move this trade from one that is on the hoof to one that is on the hook, so that beef producers can get full value for what they produce?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman will know that there is a significant British export trade. We have recently got

British beef back into CAP reform for the first time for a number of years, which is a significant improvement to the situation. If meat is sold on the hook, like sheepmeat, the added value comes to the United Kingdom, but if people wish to buy British beef or British lamb on the hoof, the treaty of Rome does not permit us to prevent that sale. Furthermore, if that is what people want, we can make sure that when it is transported in good condition, it arrives in good condition, healthy and good both for the consumer and the animals concerned.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: How many more years will it take my hon. Friend to discover the obvious truth—that the only way in agricultural produce to relate supply and demand is by a quota system, such as that which exists for milk products?

Mr. Curry: I remember the introduction of milk quotas and I recall the number of times that we have been obliged to cut the quotas because of the continued failure to match output with demand. We are faced with yet a new demand for a cut in milk quotas and it is precisely for that reason that it will take a long time to convince me that quotas are the answer.

Dr. David Clark: Can the Minister explain why major British steak restaurants do not use a single ounce of European beef and say that this is because it lacks quality, when we have almost 1 million tonnes in intervention?

Mr. Curry: Since I do not run any steak restaurants the answer to that is no. But I can tell them where they will get extremely good quality English beef, starting in my constituency. As I was buying fish early this morning, I shall undertake to bring the hon. Gentleman a sample of beef from my constituency where I live.

Mr. Jopling: Is my hon. Friend aware that beef producers in the Lake district who, together with sheep producers, are having a difficult time, are rejoicing today following yesterday's announcement of the extension of the environmentally sensitive area scheme to the Lake district? The promise of many millions of pounds coming to their assistance demonstrates clearly that the Government are well aware of their problems and the need to preserve those beautiful areas.

Mr. Curry: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. I recall that the first ESAs were designated when he was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, so he is very much the author of the scheme. It is true that the scheme brings benefits to farmers, the landscape and all who live in and visit the countryside. It is rare to have a scheme that makes everyone happy, but this appears to be one of the few instances where that is so. I hope that we can discover more.

Organic Farming

8. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support is being given to increase the number of farmers using organic methods.

Mr. Curry: In addition to that aid which is available to all farmers, we are financing research and development on organic farming systems and are grant aiding the United Kingdom register of organic food standards.

Ms. Hoey: Research is important, but about two years ago the hon. Gentleman's Department announced the launch of a conversion scheme for organic farmers in Britain. More than 70 per cent. of organic produce in Britain is imported and support for German organic farmers is greater. Should not the Government be taking a lead in giving those British farmers who want to convert the same opportunities as continental farmers?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Lady will know that we sought to introduce an organic conversion scheme, but at the time the Community regulations did not permit it. Similarly, we wanted a young entrants scheme for milk which was not possible. That has now been overtaken by the MacSharry proposals. We are aiming to introduce an organic conversion scheme in the course of the MacSharry reform because we believe that farmers should have that opportunity. Whether consumers want to buy and eat organic produce is a matter for them.

Sir Richard Body: Will my hon. Friend bear it in mind that most of us who are organic farmers are receiving a premium of 25 per cent. above the market price, so we are not in need of the production subsidy to which he alluded? On the other hand, we welcome wholeheartedly the proposals for organic research in "Our Farming Future".

Mr. Curry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is important that in all these matters the market should decide whether it wants a product or not. Our job is to ensure that what purports to be an organic product is organic and not a false product, and that is what we have done. It is interesting to note that the previous Labour Government showed not the slightest interest in organic production.

Mr. William Ross: What research has there been into the cost of producing food by organic means compared with the more usual methods? What sort of profits can farmers expect if they move completely to organic methods?

Mr. Curry: I do not think that anyone is suggesting that there should be universal production of organic foods. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) said, organic foods command a premium and a significant proportion of such food is imported, so there is certainly scope to increase output in the United Kingdom. But the market must decide whether it wants such food and, if so, what sort of premium to pay for it. I do not think that we shall see universal organic production.

Consultative Document

9. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he hopes to publish his consultative document about the future of United Kingdom agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's statement on agriculture, "Our Farming Future", was published on 15 November.

Mr. Hicks: I am sure that all concerned with agriculture and the future of the countryside will welcome that review. Does my right hon. Friend agree that farmers make a major contribution to the rural economy and that if that function is to continue, it is essential that, in the context of the CAP reforms, there should be no discrimination

against United Kingdom producers on the basis of farm size, and that payment for alternative forms of land use must be meaningful?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his congratulations. I agree: payments must indeed be meaningful, and farmers must be paid for doing the job. We do not want to pay them for doing nothing; we want to pay them to look after the land properly. That is why we want environmental payments to be at the centre of agricultural reform, rather than being an extra.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister give urgent consideration to a serious danger that is likely to develop as a result of the ban on stubble burning? There will almost certainly be a considerable increase in the use of pesticides and other farm poisons.

Mr. Gummer: I would not designate pesticides "farm poisons". I think that, although we should use them to the minimum extent that is required, we should be grateful for the existence of pesticides, for without them we should not be able to feed our people so generously and valuably. I am well aware of the problem that the hon. Gentleman mentions, but I nevertheless feel that the Government were right to ban stubble burning, which I consider an unacceptable practice.

Mr. Marland: I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on his document "Our Farming Future". Does he believe that the day will ever dawn when we can begin to undo the harm done by the market-distorting subsidies that are given not only across the whole of agriculture, but across the European Community? The common agricultural policy has never cost so much money, yet the money never seems to be enough.

Mr. Gummer: I agree. Paradoxically, at a time when the CAP is more expensive than ever before, farmers rightly complain that their incomes have diminished significantly. We need a reformed CAP that will do its job properly, and to do that we must be full, active and central members of the Community. I reject the remarks made earlier by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who said from a sedentary position, "We have had 20 minutes slagging off the common market", and then added—turning to his hon. Friends—"and now you are going to vote for it." That shows the extent of Labour's unity on the Common Market.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

10. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to introduce a decommissioning scheme for fishing vessels.

Mr. Curry: The Government are ready to consider a package of industry proposals which could include decommissioning, but only if it forms part of a wider conservation package aimed at reducing fishing effort.

Mr. Campbell: I welcome the Minister's lukewarm conversion to the idea of a decommissioning scheme, but will he explain why it has taken so long? Fishing interests have long urged a change of attitude on the Government. Has it not been clear for some time that sensible conservation measures can be achieved only if the fishing fleet is restructured in a sensible way?

Mr. Curry: I do not agree. It is important to distinguish between decommissioning as the sole instrument of conservation, and the other conservation measures that are necessary. It is simply not true to say that decommissioning by itself does anything for conservation; technical conservation and effort control must also be part of the process. As I have said, however, we are prepared to consider the possibility of a decommissioning scheme, provided that it is part of an overall conservation package. Conservation is, of course, important and I stress that fishing organisations must include it in their proposals if they wish to be taken seriously.

Mr. Harris: I appreciate the difficulties that surround a decommissioning scheme and I agree with my hon. Friend that it is not a panacea. Does he agree, however, that the pressure for such a scheme to be introduced is likely to increase in view of the Commission's latest proposals—not yet made public—for some pretty hefty cuts in quota, not least for the south-west of England? Will he agree to receive an all-party delegation of Members of Parliament to discuss the details of a scheme?

Mr. Curry: I have already said that I will accept a delegation of hon. Members to discuss the possibility of decommissioning; in fact, I believe that a date has been agreed. Let me make it clear, however, that in accepting the delegation I am not accepting the principle of decommissioning. Conservation must be seen as a package. Effort control is part of that package; decommissioning could be part of it. I am having an extremely constructive dialogue with the fishing organisations and I hope that it will continue. The fact that that dialogue is beginning is due to the fishing industry's recent recognition that effort control matters.

Milk Marketing Board

11. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the board's future role.

16. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is next due to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Gummer: I last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on 6 November.

Mr. Martlew: Is the Minister aware that the Milk Marketing Board has served the country well since 1933, especially in my area of Cumbria? Will the Minister acknowledge that there are major concerns and worries among dairy farmers in this country? Will he tell the dairy farmers and the House that he will support the MMB as it stands now, despite all the attacks from the EEC?

Mr. Gummer: Anybody who said, "This company has remained the same for 60 years, so please invest in it" would receive a dusty answer from anybody who was sensibly involved. The world has changed over the past 60 years and that is why the Milk Marketing Board has said that it has to change. The Labour party has a policy of telling the MMB that it does not know its own business and that it should not change but go on as it has for the past 60 years. Once again, the Labour party shows that it

knows nothing about farming, cares even less, and hopes to win a vote or two for the most reactionary policy known in Britain.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the apprehensions felt by dairy farmers in my constituency about the future level of their incomes? Does he propose to take any action to reassure them?

Mr. Gummer: I am very much aware of that and that is why, as my hon. Friend knows, the Milk Marketing Board has been concerned to change its structure in order to defend the income of his constituents and others. In general, over the past 10 years, the receipts of dairy farmers in Britain have been lower than most in the rest of Europe, but consumers have paid more for liquid milk than in the rest of Europe. Therefore, the Milk Marketing Board is right to seek changes and the Labour party is wrong to try to stop it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend believe that there should be a referendum on the Maastricht summit? What is my right hon. Friend's opinion about a referendum to be held sometime in the future on the single currency?

The Prime Minister: The answer to my hon. Friend's question in both cases is no. The Government do not intend to hold a referendum on the outcome of the Maastricht negotiations. There is no case for one and the Government will not offer one. On the second part of my hon. Friend's question, that issue would, self-evidently, be a matter for a future Parliament, but my view remains that we are a parliamentary democracy and I see no need for a referendum.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for that answer. Will he, therefore, confirm that for as long as he is leader of the Conservative party it will never accept referendums on European Community matters?

The Prime Minister: I have just made the point clear to the right hon. Gentleman. On this issue I do not see the need for a referendum.

Q2. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to read the speech of Mr. Jacques Delors in which he said that no single group of nations had survived purely on the basis of intergovernmental relationships? Will my right hon. Friend remind Mr. Delors of the existence of NATO, where intergovernmental agreement has succeeded, and contrast it with the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, where excessive central control has undoubtedly failed?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very telling point. The Community including the Commission, must adapt to the changes in Europe. There is a case for flexible arrangements and I set that out yesterday, but they are for Governments to determine. They are expressly not policy matters for the Commission to determine.

Mr. Ashdown: Having yesterday heard the views of his predecessor with regard to Europe, surely the Prime Minister must now realise that he has to make a choice. He can either have Finchley or Maastricht, but he cannot have both. Will he now choose Europe or her? Or will he stay lamely stuck on the fence?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman was here yesterday when I set out quite clearly and in some detail the Government's position on the negotiations at Maastricht. As I recall, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) began her speech by giving me her full support—*[Interruption.]*

Q3. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Batiste: Since our success in exploiting the opportunities of the European Community must depend considerably on getting the maximum benefit from our education system, is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern that mixed ability teaching in secondary schools is causing widespread under-achievement by pupils at both ends of the ability spectrum? Will he therefore join me in welcoming the comment yesterday of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science that streaming is the only effective way of getting the best from all our children?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and with the remarks by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Over the past few months he has shown clearly that he will make one of the great Secretaries of State for Education and Science.

Q4. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Following his reply last Tuesday to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), will the Prime Minister now promise to restore the unemployment benefit rights which so benefited him when he was a young man in the 1960s and which he abolished in the 1980s? Is not the Prime Minister guilty of kicking away the ladder now that he has got to the top?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the social security system any more than the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). If he did, he would be aware that since the early 1960s all sorts of care

allowances have been introduced such as invalid care allowance and the hon. Gentleman clearly did not know about that.

Q5. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be aware that we have more inward investment than any other European Commission country, partly as a result of our lower taxation policies on income, profits and employers. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are likely to lose our advantage in attracting inward investment if we sign up to a policy of binding minimum rates of taxation in Europe, a policy which is already supported and endorsed by the Labour party and was yesterday by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)?

The Prime Minister: Higher corporate taxes are bound to mean lower inward investment from abroad, particularly in many of the regions of this country. It would be particularly damaging for Scotland, and that is also why a Scottish assembly with tax-raising powers would be very bad news indeed for Scotland. We will leave it to the Opposition to advocate higher taxes on companies and individuals. That is not our policy. We will advocate lower taxes and in so doing will encourage more inward investment.

Q6. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Callaghan: In view of the terrible brain damage suffered by two boxers in recent bouts, will the Prime Minister give the House his views on boxing? Does he agree with the British Medical Association that boxing should be banned in this country?

The Prime Minister: No. I do not agree with banning boxing in this country. It is important that there is proper medical attention and that the referee has full discretion to stop the bout whenever he wishes. Boxing should not be banned in this country, and any move to do so would not have my support.

Q7. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir George Gardiner: Will my right hon. Friend give his assessment of the kind of man who, after declaring himself to be a reluctant European, can argue today in favour of an immediate signing-up to a single currency and joining a headlong rush to a federal Europe? In an attempt to resolve that enigma, will my right hon. Friend find time to have a private word with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)?

The Prime Minister: I have a busy day, and I doubt whether I will have time for that, but I share my hon. Friend's concern at the U-turns that we have seen, but not just from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—although certainly from him—but from the Labour party. We should remember that, if we had listened to the Labour party, we would not be negotiating at Maastricht, we would be queueing outside the Community trying to get back into it.

Tibet

Q8. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with President Bush about the implications of that section of the State Department Authorization Act 1991 which relates to Tibet and the position of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile.

The Prime Minister: None, Sir.

Dr. Godman: The United States Congress, by way of that Act, holds to the view that Tibet is an occupied country whose true representatives are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile. It would appear, would it not, that President Bush also has that perception, as he signed that Act on 28 October? Does the Prime Minister share the belief that Tibet is an occupied country whose true representatives are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile?

The Prime Minister: Tibet has never been internationally recognised as an independent country. No country in the world regards Tibet as independent now. Having said that, we have taken every opportunity, including my recent visit to China, to set out our concerns about the way in which Tibetans are treated and to urge that they have proper human rights.

Mr. Quentin Davies: While rejoicing with the rest of the civilised world at the release of Terry Waite and the other hostages—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Tibet.

Engagements

Q9. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, for the first time since the start of the recession, responses from Milton Keynes business to the latest quarterly economy survey show an increase in home sales and orders and that the more benign economic climate, with falling interest rates and falling inflation, has resulted in a further large increase in business confidence and an expectation of higher turnover and higher profits over the next 12 months? Is not that very good news indeed?

The Prime Minister: It is, indeed, but it was foreshadowed by the authoritative CBI survey which shows rising expectations for investment, output and exports. That means an increase in planned spending on training and innovation which has now returned to pre-recession levels.

Mr. Beggs: Can the Prime Minister assure the House that there will be no further concessions to the Irish

Republic in order to obtain the extradition of terrorist suspects to stand trial in the United Kingdom? Further, will he assure us that, if Her Majesty's Government decide to appoint a commissioner to supervise terrorist interrogations, that commissioner will be a British citizen?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that we do not bargain and that we do not do deals. That has remained, does remain, and will remain the position.

Q10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cran: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents in the great northern constituency of Beverley would like to get away from the iron grip of Labour-controlled Humberside council? As the Boundary Commission has already asked for that council to be abolished, does my right hon. Friend agree that the local government commission that he is to establish should consider abolishing Humberside council before any other?

The Prime Minister: I know of my hon. Friend's particular interest in that matter, but it would be wise to wait until our new local government commission has examined the overall structure of local government before making any specific decisions. I assure my hon. Friend that we intend to ask the new commission to make that task one of its early priorities.

Mr. Benn: I rise to ask your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on a point——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called the right hon. Gentleman to ask a question.

Mr. Benn: In that case, Mr. Speaker, my question touches on a point that I will raise with you in a moment.

Mr. Speaker: I would much rather that the right hon. Gentleman asks his question of the Prime Minister, not me.

Mr. Benn: The whole House understands that the Prime Minister's view is that the British people have no right to be directly consulted on the constitutional changes that may emerge from Maastricht. However, the Prime Minister will know, having been present for yesterday's debate, that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House argue for a referendum. If the Prime Minister believes in parliamentary democracy, does he not agree that the House has a right to decide whether there should be a referendum, and will he provide an opportunity to hold one?

The Prime Minister: Many views can be held on the subject of referendums. I have expressed my own, and I do not intend to change it.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Motion on the Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER—Opposition day (1st Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate described as "The Housing Problem" followed by a debate entitled "Sports Provision in the United Kingdom". Both debates arise on Opposition motions.

Motion to take note of EC documents relating to the 1992 EC budget. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER—Proceedings on the Welsh Development Agency Bill.

FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Transport and Works Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 27 November to consider European Community document No. 7485/91 relating to child care.

European Standing Committee B will also meet at 4.30 pm on Monday 2 December to consider European Community documents relating to indirect taxation. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

[Wednesday 27 November
European Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community document
7485/91 Child Care
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 24-ii (1991-92)
Floor of the House

Relevant European Community documents

(a) 7184/91	*Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1992*
(b) 7368/91	*Letter of Amendment No. 1 to 1992 Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities*
(c) 8442/91	*Letter of Amendment No. 2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1992*
(d) Unnumbered	*Commission's Letter of Amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1992*
(e) 7731/91	*Draft Budget of European Communities for 1992*
(f) 9092/91	*The European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget of the Communities for 1992*
(g) Unnumbered	*Council Decisions on the European Parliament's proposed amendments to the Draft Budget for 1992*
(h) 8719/91	*Revision of Financial Perspective: 1992 Preliminary Draft Budget*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 29-xxviii (1990-91)
(b) HC 24-i (1991-92)
(c) No report
(d) No report
(e) HC 29-xxx (1990-91)
(f) HC 24-i (1991-92)
(g) No report
(h) HC 24-i (1991-92)

Monday 2 December
European Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community documents

(a) 6762/89	*Indirect Taxes: Harmonisation*
(b) 6641/90	*Indirect Taxes: Harmonisation*
(c) 6642/90	*Indirect Taxes (Administrative Co-operation)*
(d) 9670/90	*Holding and Movement of Excisable Goods*

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15-xxxii (1988-89) and HC 29-xxviii (1990-91)
(b) HC 11-xxxi (1989-90), HC 29-i (1990-91) and HC 24-i (1991-92)
(c) HC 11-xxxi (1989-90) and HC 24-ii (1991-92)
(d) HC 11-xxxiii (1989-90) and HC 24-ii (1991-92)

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement early next week by the Home Secretary? Is he aware of the serious allegations made in the television programme "Thames Reports" last week about the alleged involvement of the police in the break-out of terrorists from Brixton prison last July? Are not those very serious allegations? Is it not also serious that it is implied that the Home Office knew about that involvement at the time? Is not the House of Commons, indeed the country as a whole, entitled to hear from the Home Secretary in person exactly whether those allegations have any foundation? Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early oral statement on that important matter?

What has happened to the statements that we expected on revenue support grant? Given that the decision of the Department of the Environment and of the Scottish and Welsh Offices will have huge implications for the levels of poll tax that people will be expected to pay next year, should we not have an early statement in the Chamber on those issues?

Turning now to his own responsibilities, when does the Leader of the House expect to be able to make a statement on expanding the provisions of communication between Members of this House and the institutions of the

[Dr. Cunningham]

European Community? I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to tell us about that soon and that he will make a statement on that matter next week.

Can the Leader of the House find time soon for a debate on the economy of London? Is he aware of the report by the Henley Centre for Forecasting, which states that, in the first nine months of this year, 12,359 small businesses failed in London and the south-east, which is more than in the whole of last year and shows an alarming and continuing increase in business failures in our capital city? The economy of London is suffering dreadfully in this second Conservative recession, and we should have an opportunity to debate that matter in the House as soon as possible.

Mr. MacGregor: No statement is necessary on the Brixton escape and there will not be a statement next week. I understand that, in view of the allegations about the conduct of Staffordshire special branch officers, the chief constable of Staffordshire has arranged for a full investigation by the deputy chief constable of another force. It would not be appropriate for the Home Secretary to comment until the inquiry is completed.

On the hon. Gentleman's request for a revenue support grant statement from my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales, the hon. Gentleman is correct in intimating that statements on those matters are necessary, and I hope that they will be made very soon—I hope next week. I cannot give a precise date, but that is the intention.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's point about travel —which is what I think that he had in mind when he referred to "communication"—by hon. Members to European Community institutions, I hope to table the necessary resolutions very soon. They are being technically completed at the moment.

In view of our heavy business, especially that relating to legislation, I see no prospect for a debate in Government time on the economy of London.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No fewer than 82 right hon. and hon. Gentlemen are seeking to take part——

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): And Ladies.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, and Ladies—are seeking to speak in the European debate. Would the hon. Gentlemen—and Ladies—who wish to participate please reserve their fire at business questions so that we can get on? I may then be able to call them.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Will my right hon. Friend encourage the Opposition to initiate a Supply day debate in the not-too-distant future on the subject of the recession, because there is a strange idea, fostered by the Opposition and the media, that it is a peculiarly British disease, whereas it is worldwide? A debate would present a good opportunity to underline the fact that many countries are experiencing far more difficulties than we are.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made the point. Those of us who travel abroad know that he is right. The economic issues that he has menioned exist in many other countries and have implications for our position. I am sure that he will agree that the improvements in manufacturing exports clearly show how well British industry is doing, given the world situation.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on yesterday's meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference, especially in the light of the Prime Minister's failure to respond to the second part of the question that was asked by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs)?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure whether a statement on yesterday's meeting would be appropriate, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's request to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of the whole House for agreeing to extend last night's debate until midnight, thus allowing a large number of Members to be called?

Mr. MacGregor: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement next week about political asylum fraud? Will he ensure specifically that the Home Secretary gives an assurance that no pressure or persuasion is being applied to the Metropolitan police in the case of Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi of Hayes to halt their inquiries or withdraw requests to investigate the bank accounts of Members of Parliament who have business or other links with Mr. Bedi?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot comment on that case. The issue of political asylum is, of course, being debated in relation to a Bill which is currently going through the House.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to look at the Order Paper recently? Has he noticed that several right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have tabled a motion about the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland affairs? Has my right hon. Friend been able to consider that point yet?

Mr. MacGregor: As the House knows, because I have said it several times in business questions, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has said that the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is best taken forward in the context of the fresh political talks. I believe that that is right. We must all hope that in due course the talks will proceed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food again to make a statement about the dioxins in Bolsover? Is he aware that, when the dioxin-contaminated milk was transferred in the summer from Bolsover to Severn-Trent for disposal, Severn-Trent did not have a licence? Then an attempt was made to get rid of it at 800 deg C in the west midlands but the incinerator needed to be at 1,200 deg C. The result was that the dioxins from Bolsover in the east midlands were transmitted all over the west midlands. It is high time that there was a public inquiry into the matter and that the Minister of Agriculture made a statement at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. MacGregor: I have responded as fully as possible when the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter, and I have drawn it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As I have said before, the results of the testing will be published when all the data have been evaluated in the new year.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): What is the progress on introducing the Bill to increase the penalties for youngsters who steal cars? Is my right hon. Friend aware that last night in my constituency a woman was killed in a car accident and three others were injured, one extremely seriously? The driver of the other car, which was stolen, was a 16-year-old boy. Will my right hon. Friend join me in sending condolences to the bereaved family and wishing those who are injured a speedy recovery? Does he agree that the sooner we put new measures on the statute book, the sooner we can instil into these young criminals the knowledge that such selfish and irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly join my hon. Friend in sending condolences to the bereaved family and wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. I am sure that the whole House deplores such incidents. There can be no doubt about the message to young people who engage in this activity. I assure my hon. Friend that we are proceeding with urgency on the Bill. Technical considerations are being completed, and I hope that we shall be able to put it to the House before long. In view of what my hon. Friend has said—with which I am sure that everyone in the House agrees—I hope that the Bill will have a speedy passage through the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a statement on Sunday trading? Is it true, that B&Q sponsored the agents' ball at the Conservative party conference? What is the connection?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not certain whether that is true, but I am sure that there is no connection. We have no plans to make any changes to the legislation on Sunday trading in the near future—for example, before Christmas. As the House knows, the Minister of State, Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), has had detailed discussions on the reform of Sunday trading. Everyone recognises that the law is anomalous. The difficulty is to find a solution that will command majority support in the House. My right hon. Friend is continuing to explore that in her discussions.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, before we get to Maastricht, it is important that we should have the views of all hon. Members? Therefore, will he arrange another debate before the summit so that we can hear the views of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and establish whether all ex-leaders of the Labour party support its present policy?

Mr. MacGregor: If we tried to extend that to all Labour Members rather than to ex-leaders, we would have to debate the issue all week to tempt them to their feet. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. He is right to draw attention to the divisions on the Labour side of the House, which were made clear by the way in which the House responded to a point that the Leader of the Opposition made yesterday about the so-called unity of the Labour party. However, we have endeavoured to have as long a debate as we can on the issue yesterday and today.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Would the Leader of the House ensure that we discuss the relationship between a Secretary of State and a Select Committee of the House at the earliest opportunity? I refer to the "Waldegate Affair", of which I am sure he is aware.

Mr. MacGregor: That is a completely wrong description of a matter which the Select Committee on Privileges is now discussing—which is why it would not be appropriate for me to say anything further.

Dr. John Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend consider early-day motion 209, which relates to a British company that has achieved a wonderful contract in Kenya?

[That this House calls upon the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Minister of State for Overseas Development to grant Aid Trade Provision Cover and ECGD cover over three years from 1992 to enable Communication Supplies Ltd. to continue to export further System X telephone exchanges and ancillary equipment to Kenya, which they have done successfully for the past seven years; and furthermore notes that the Kenyan Government considers this project as top of their list of priorities for trade with the United Kingdom, and the project will save and provide many thousands of jobs throughout the United Kingdom and will lead to repeat business for many years to come, and that if funding is not forthcoming the contract will be lost to the United Kingdom and awarded to either Japanese, French or Italian companies, all of whom have shown open interest.]

Will he consider an early debate on that important issue, or convey the motion's sentiments to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly convey the sentiments, but I am afraid that I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Leader of the House acknowledge that the discussions in which Ministers are involved in the European Commission regarding the MacSharry proposals are of fundamental importance to the future of British agriculture? Will he undertake to debate, in Government time, the negotiations before their conclusion is reached or, alternatively, afterwards?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly agree about the importance of the MacSharry proposals. The hon. Gentleman asks whether we could debate them after they have been debated in the European Community, but we are talking about a long time ahead. I understand that the Scrutiny Committee is due to examine the detailed text on 27 November, and we certainly plan to have a debate in early December. I agree with the hon. Gentleman on this matter.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Will my right hon. Friend note that, with 82 hon. Members wishing to express an opinion in the debate later this afternoon, any suggestion that the additional two hours provided is adequate is clearly wide of the mark? Will he give the House an assurance that, when we discuss the post-Maastricht position, the debate will be unlimited? On

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his discussions with Front-Bench Members, in the absence of a commitment to a referendum, will he ensure that, at least on this side of the House, there is a free vote?

Mr. MacGregor: I have done my best to give as much time as possible to the debate yesterday and today, including making my answers to business questions as short as possible so that we can get on with the debate. However, I would certainly not want to give a commitment about a further debate.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that the representatives of every medical and professional body in Aberdeen and Grampian region oppose the opt-out application for Foresterhill hospitals? Although he may not care to remember as far back as a fortnight ago, does he recollect that every candidate in the Kincardine and Deeside by-election, including his own, expressed opposition to the opt-out proposals? Will he ensure that next week the Secretary of State for Scotland comes to the House and rejects the proposals out of hand?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is considering the proposals and will make a statement on the matter as soon as he is ready.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Is the Leader of the House aware that more than 70 right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have signed a prayer against the explosives regulations? Will he find time to debate the matter?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noted what my hon. Friend has said. I shall have to consider it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 148 about the disgraceful closure of Coventry colliery with the loss of 1,300 jobs?

[That this House condemns British Coal for its closure of the Coventry Colliery at Keresely with the loss of 1,300 jobs, completed in a mere 13 days from the announcement of the decision to the working of the last shift; believes that the pit is not abandoned but mothballed with 40 million tonnes of good quality reserves of medium sulphur content which will be kept on a care and maintenance basis until a link-up is organised by a privatised Daw Mill Colliery should the Government be re-elected; condemns British Coal's refusal to attend two meetings of local authority and parish councillors, local honourable Members of this House and church representatives and notes the absence at the meetings of 24th October and 11th November of the local Tory honourable Members; and calls for a public inquiry into the methods of the closure and the false economics which talk of 'losses' yet fail to take into account the future cost to public funds of lost production and taxes paid, and of dole and unemployment payments to be made.]

Following a meeting this morning at the Department of Energy, may I ask him to arrange for the Secretary of State to make a statement answering the anger in Coventry, not just about the way in which the pit was closed and the loss of jobs, but the belief that the closure took place to mothball 40 million tonnes of medium sulphur content coal so that, were the Conservatives to be re-elected and the pits privatised, Daw Mill could take that coal out in a UDM pit? How much further do the Government intend to take their vendetta against members of the NUM?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman refers. He will know that decisions on individual colliery closures are matters for the British Coal Corporation. I understand that the closure of the colliery in question has been due to heavy losses resulting from continued failure to meet operating targets.

Sir Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people inside and outside the House, while recognising that it is important to spend two days debating the future of Europe, wonder why the House is not debating, even for a short time, the fact that a war is raging in a European country—Yugoslavia? Will he consider having a debate on the situation there?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noted my hon. Friend's remarks. My problem is that a great deal of business needs to be done, and I have to try to accommodate that business as well.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement about the way in which contractors are paid £10 an hour for security guards at some of our vital establishments when security guards in my constituency are being paid £1·80 an hour? Do I see the Leader of the House smiling at that? Is he aware that the nation's security establishments are being guarded by people who are paid £1·80 an hour? It is a lamentable state of affairs. The Secretary of State should make a statement about private security firms guarding the nation's military establishments.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the smile was not about the issue he was raising. I do not think it would be appropriate for a statement, but I shall draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Will my right hon. Friend undertake to arrange a debate before Christmas, or at least before the December Council of Ministers meeting on fishing, so that we may have our annual chance to discuss the state of the fishing industry in England and elsewhere in the kingdom?

Mr. MacGregor: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern, and particularly his constituency concern about that issue. I promise him that I am endeavouring to find time for a debate.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): May we have a statement about whether the Government intend to implement a European directive—it should have come into effect this weekend—by which local authorities will be informed when nuclear waste is being transported through their areas? This is a vital issue. Is he aware that from Brunswick in Germany tomorrow a nuclear waste consignment will be arriving at Dover? It will be stored over the weekend at Winfrith and on Tuesday will arrive at Dounreay for reprocessing. Not one authority has been advised about that. It is wrong that we should have to reply on voluntary information in such an extremely important matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall look into the point with my right hon. Friends and endeavour to get a response to the hon. Lady.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Dover port has special facilities for the safe transport of nuclear waste and is leading the country in making sure that the nuclear industry safety standards are fully adopted? Is he further aware that the port and officials at Dover make a major contribution to safety in this area? Will he, if he thinks it necessary, arrange for a debate on the matter?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made the point clearly and I am grateful to him for doing so, in view of which I do not think a debate is necessary.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I urge the Leader of the House to reconsider the answer he gave to the shadow Leader of the House about the possibility of a statement being made by the Home Secretary next week on the Brixton prison break-out. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that two allegations were made in the programme in question? One was about the alleged involvement of the special branch. The other—equally damaging and important—was the allegation that the Home Office knew about the police involvement. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that, as we would expect of the British police, when a serious allegation is made, the chief constable of one force arranges for a senior officer of another to investigate the allegations, and everything about that investigation is laid bare for the public to see.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should ask a question.

Mr. Ewing: Just as the Home Secretary used the prison officers as a scapegoat for the break-out——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a matter for debate; it is not a question.

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to the point that I made about the statement. The hon. Gentleman's allegation about my right hon. Friend is absurd and wrong.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As returning stolen goods is different from aid, will my right hon. Friend ensure that, when the Foreign Secretary makes a statement on the return of the gold stolen by the Labour Government with the assistance of the then leaders of the Liberal party and is replaced in the Bank of England to the order of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, that statement is not confused with an agreement on giving aid, which is a wholly different matter?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is sitting beside me and has heard my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 220.

[That this House is dismayed at the failure of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to provide adequate services at Cardiff-Wales Airport; considers it to be an absolute dereliction of duty to fail to provide continuous customs monitoring of international flights into the airport; notes that travellers are advised to ring the Customs Office at Barry Maritime Docks in the event of their having anything to declare; and, given the potential danger of terrorist activity, drug smuggling and other illegal activities, demands the immediate restoration of a full customs service forthwith.]

May we have an early debate on the restructuring that is taking place in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise which has left Wales's international airport without customs and passport control? With regular flights arriving from Amsterdam, Miami and Cyprus, it raises serious questions about increases in terrorist activity, drug smuggling and other illegal activities. That will worry hon. Members on both sides of the House, and we should discuss it at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that Customs continues to monitor international flights into the airport. Customs staff will continue to attend and challenge passengers on the basis of the assessed risks of illegal importations of, for example, drugs, obscene material and the instruments of terrorism to which he referred.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Although we are a parliamentary democracy and would expect to take nearly every final decision in this place, is there not a body of respectable constitutional opinion that says that, if we propose to transfer the democratic accountability from a Westminster Parliament to an unelected European Commission, or even an elected European Parliament, the British people are entitled to take a view on the matter? Furthermore, is my right hon. Friend aware that we are unable to vote on that matter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a question of debate. The hon. and learned Gentleman must not make a speech that he might make if I were to call him.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not think that I shall be called, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, even if I were called, there is no opportunity to vote on the issue. May we have a debate next week or as soon as possible to consider whether we should have a referendum at any stage and in what circumstances?

Mr. MacGregor: Those are obviously matters that can be discussed in today's debate, so I see no need for a further debate. I entirely share the views which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expressed this afternoon.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Leader of the House consider allocating time to look at planning requirements as they affect former nationalised industries such as the regional electricity boards, which continue to behave as though they were not in business for profit? They position their pylons anywhere they choose and act as though they were still the strategic industry that they were once defined as.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman must use the time available to him in the normal way to debate that matter. I see no opportunity to debate it in Government time.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) asked about the economy of London. May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to the further deterioration in the

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state of local government in the London borough of Lambeth? A Labour woman councillor has suddenly resigned in mysterious circumstances in St. Martin's ward and the council is now seeking to block information to the public. Will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to investigate the matter and make a statement to the House about the deepening trough of local government in Labour-controlled parts of London?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week on the working of the Crossbows Act 1987, which was enacted after a number of serious incidents? The Act limits the possession of crossbows to those over the age of 17. In view of the serious incident that took place last night in Bradford, may we have a statement on the working of the Act to examine the possibility of a licensing system to curb even further the possession of such potentially highly dangerous weapons and to prevent a repetition of last night's attack?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise a statement, but the hon. Gentleman knows that it will be possible for him to raise the matter at other times, such as on the Adjournment. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House end the continuing denial of ready access to important information brought about by the Government's failure to publish in an accessible form the answers to hon. Members' questions to executive agencies? Such information is available only in the splendid publication produced by my office with, this month, the help of the Rowntree Trust. It is nonsense that it should be published by private enterprise and an outside charity. When will the Leader of the House publish the answers to such questions in a supplement to *Hansard*?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen a number of comments that have been made on the subject, including those by the Select Committees. The Government have been considering how to make available improved access to the information. I shall make an announcement very shortly.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris)? What on earth will our constituents think of parliamentary democracy if so many of us are deprived of the opportunity of debating the subject?

Mr. MacGregor: In the run-up to the Maastricht negotiations, we have endeavoured to enable hon. Members to debate the matter in as wide and lengthy a manner as possible in the House. Obviously, there has to be some limit to the length of debates, but by extending last night's debate I endeavoured to allow as many Members as possible to contribute.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Member present for the business statement?

Mr. Faulds: Yes, all the way through. I did doze off once or twice.

Will the Leader of the House urge the Prime Minister to use his powers to remove from the board of trustees of national institutions those guilty of criminal offences? I refer of course to Gerald Ronson, who was appointed by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that there will be a statement or debate on that matter next week.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, I dislike cutting short business questions. I shall allow them to continue until 4.10 pm, and I hope to call everyone. However, Members should make their questions brief.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): In view of the serious deterioration of the services provided by Network SouthEast on the Kent link and Kent coast lines which is causing serious dislocation and discomfort to my constituents and many other people, will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement next week on what plans he has to improve those services urgently?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. However, I do not think that there will be an opportunity for a statement on the subject next week.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate on the police next week to enable the House to send congratulations to Harrow police who, through their calm and efficient work yesterday, brought a siege at Pinn medical centre, in my constituency, to a peaceful conclusion? A debate would enable hon. Members to congratulate and thank PC David Nicholls, who, although a married man with two children, offered to take the place of the hostage at great risk to himself.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the House agrees with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend. I am glad that he has had an opportunity to make the point.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): May we have a debate next week on local government to give me the opportunity to point out that, following its disastrous investment of £6·5 million in BCCI, Bury's Labour council now proposes to close three old people's homes? Is that not an absolute disgrace and a foretaste of things to come if Labour is ever given power in this country?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right about that being a foretaste of things to come if Labour ever comes to power. I am glad to say that I do not think that it will. My hon. Friend makes his point powerfully, and there is no need for a debate next week to take it further.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will my right hon. Friend consider finding time in the not-too-distant future for a debate on parliamentary language? There is a pressing need for a debate in view of the petulant outburst by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MacGregor: I think that that is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that it is, and I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) to Peterborough's column in today's issue of *The Daily Telegraph.*

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Would my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the work of the national health service trust hospitals? Is he aware that, following the good news from Guy's hospital last week, it has been reported that since it became an NHS trust the Royal Free Trust hospital, which serves part of my constituency, has been able to increase the number of patients it treats and reduce its waiting lists? Any debate on NHS trusts will have to take place in Government time and not in Opposition time.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that we shall have an opportunity in future to debate the work of NHS trusts. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that these are important matters and that the trusts are already demonstrating the value of the change that we made. There will not be a debate next week, but I am sure that we shall have other opportunities to debate the subject.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that to the people of this country the freedom of the press is every bit as important as democratic accountability? Does he know that at the moment there is a campaign throughout Europe and in all the other member states to preserve the freedom of the press? Is he aware that a British agency was recently summoned to the Commission and told that if it did not withdraw from that campaign its Commission account would be stopped forthwith ? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a severe——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are on the subject of the business for next week.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend consider making sure that the issue of the freedom of the press in relation to the European Community is debated as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to pursue that matter in other ways. I cannot see the prospect of a debate next week.

Points of Order

4.7 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, concerning the statement made to the House by the Home Secretary on 8 July. The statement purported to describe the break-out from Brixton prison on the previous day. We now know that material, crucial facts were omitted from the Home Secretary's statement and account of what happened. As a result, the country was not so much informed as misinformed about the matter.

The Home Secretary has had many opportunities to rectify what I shall describe as his errors of omission. He has not done so. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, attempts have been made to require him to make a corrective and further statement to the House. All efforts have failed. The House and the country will make their own judgment about the reason for the Home Secretary's behaviour. What can be done to ensure that a report is made to the House, both of the full facts and on the Home Secretary's conduct?

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I need any help on this. Hon. Members heard the Leader of the House say that an investigation has been set up. In due course the Home Secretary will have to make a decision about the matter.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is unsatisfactory for the Government to hide behind an inquiry into the involvement of Staffordshire police? The point at issue is the behaviour of the Home Secretary in the House. The House is entitled to a statement from the Home Secretary, who ought to be responsible to the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: That point was raised by the hon. Member with the Leader of the House. It is not a matter for me.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a separate point has been raised, I should make it clear that the Home Secretary has not misled the House and the allegations about him are wrong. There are some security matters involved in this. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has been offered a full briefing on Privy Council terms, and he has refused it.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may not be within your knowledge that this week my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Banks) and I sought to table parliamentary questions to the Home Secretary on this matter, but it transpired that there was a blanket refusal to answer questions on any matter relating to the secret service, irrespective of how divorced they were from current operations. While I fully understand the reluctance of a Minister to give information about operations currently in progress, as that was not what we were seeking to elicit, if the Minister comes to the House and makes a statement purporting to deal fully with a matter, is he entitled to hide behind a blanket refusal that he has virtually waived? If not, does the House have any remedy?

Mr. Speaker: I have no responsibility for answers to questions. This is not a matter for me.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, in answer to a point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), you said:

"I have just said that I think 'jerk' is not among the list of unparliamentary expressions but I asked the Leader of the Opposition to refine it."—*[Official Report,* 20 November 1991; Vol 199, c.283.]

I want to make a submission to you, Mr. Speaker, which is of some substance. The list to which you refer only gives examples of what, in the past, Mr. Speaker has ruled to be unparliamentary expressions. That list has grown up by Mr. Speaker ruling each time—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The list has grown up, Mr. Speaker, by your predecessors ruling each time a new expression is used which, in the opinion of Mr. Speaker, is unparliamentary. It is important that you should remind the House that that list does not and cannot constrain Mr. Speaker not to rule that expressions which are grossly offensive are not unparliamentary purely because they have not appeared on the list in "Erskine May" before.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised a serious point concerned with a judgment that I made yesterday. He is correct in saying that there is no list in "Erskine May". It was removed some time ago, because many expressions, such as "cheeky young pup", are no longer considered to be offensive. I said yesterday that I did not think that "jerk" was an unparliamentary expression. I was not absolutely certain what the word meant, but I found out from the Peterborough column today that it means a useless person but also covers a "hornyhead" and a "chubb-like fish".

Mr. Hattersley: Speaking in more or less that capacity, Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to what the Leader of the House said about the Home Secretary's offer to me to discuss in Privy Council terms the matters with which I was concerned in my original point of order. I want to make it clear that that offer was made, but I refused it as I did not think that this was a matter that could be discussed in private by a coterie of senior Members of Parliament. I felt that it was a matter for the House and for the country.

Mr. Speaker: That has now been made clear.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

VALUE ADDED TAX

That the Value Added Tax (Buildings and Land) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 2569) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

European Community (Intergovernmental Conferences)

[SECOND DAY]

[Relevant document: Minutes of Evidence taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on 19th November (House of Commons Paper 35-i)]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [20 November]:

That this House, believing it is in Britain's interests to continue to be at the heart of the European Community and able to shape its future and that of Europe as a whole, endorses the constructive negotiating approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government in the Inter-Governmental Conferences on Economic and Monetary Union and on Political Union; and urges them to work for an agreement at the forthcoming European Council at Maastricht which avoids the development of a federal Europe, enables this country to exert the greatest influence on the economic evolution of the Community while preserving the right of Parliament to decide at a future date whether to adopt a single currency, on issues of Community competence concentrates the development of action on those issues which cannot be handled more effectively at national level and, in particular, avoids intrusive Community measures in social areas which are matters for national decision, develops a European security policy compatible with NATO and co-operation in foreign policy which safeguards this country's national interest, increases the accountability of the Commission, enhances the rule of law in the Community including improved implementation, enforcement and compliance with Community legislation, improves co-operation between European governments in the fight against drugs, terrorism and cross-border crime, and through these policies secures the long-term interests of the United Kingdom.—*[The Prime Minister.]*

Which amendment was: to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'regrets that Her Majesty's Government's preoccupation with divisions in its own Party has meant that in the Inter-Governmental Conferences is has not taken the negotiating approach necessary to ensure that the United Kingdom exercises decisive influence on the future of the Community in ways which will help to advance the living and working standards of the people of this country in company with other peoples of Europe; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to work for an agreement at the European Council which ensures inclusion of the Social Charter, qualified majority voting on social and environmental matters, powers for the European Parliament to hold the Commission to account in ways that complement the role of national parliaments, decision-making at the level—local, regional, national or Community—where maximum democratic control is at all times exercised, foreign and security policy co-operation without the development of a European Community military role, widening of the Community as rapidly as practicable, co-operation to combat terrorism and other crime, and strengthened powers for ECOFIN as the politically responsible counterpart to any European Central Bank system; and urges the Government to work to secure agreement to, and adopt policies for, high levels of employment, sustainable non-inflationary growth, balanced regional and national economic development and social cohesion, and for the fundamental reform of the CAP, in order to achieve real economic convergence in the years leading to economic and monetary union and a single currency as the essential foundation for those changes and to safeguard the long-term interests of the people of the United Kingdom.'—*[Mr. Kinnock.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that 82 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to participate. I shall put a limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock, but I ask those who are fortunate enough to be called before that time to bear the 10-minute limit in mind.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I raised a point of order about whether an amendment to the amendment in the name of the official Opposition would be eligible to be called before 10 o'clock. Since that now appears on the Order Paper, I should be grateful for your comments.

Mr. Speaker: I have not found it possible to select it.

4.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): This debate is crucial for us and it is a crucial part of the debate in the Community. It is natural for the European Community to consider from time to time its institutions and its working methods to see whether they can be bettered, and that is the purpose of the two intergovernmental conferences leading to Maastricht.

My own view is that the conferences come rather too soon after the last one. The previous examination led to the Single European Act, which was signed in 1986 and came into force just four years ago. If we had waited three years longer, the single market would have been up and running, one or two new members might have come in and we would have been able to see more clearly the future shape of eastern Europe. But the Community decided to start last year and, that done, we in Britain, led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), rightly decided that we would take a full and energetic part in the two conferences.

As Mr. Delors often says, Britain is the only member state in which there is a lively and sometimes passionate debate on Europe. That is normal here. We felt it again yesterday and it is an asset to Europe as a whole, but I also think that the weakness of our debate is that it is sometimes too defensive. We too often represent ourselves as in some way under siege, as if we were concerned only about the pace at which we yield to opinions and interests across the channel which are basically unsatisfactory and hostile. That defensive note is well astray if one looks at some of the main decisions of the Community in recent years, many of which owe a great deal to the debate in Britain and to British proposals.

First, there was the Fontainebleau settlement in 1984 where Britain obtained a rebate and the Community got a fairer means of financing itself. The Community's budgetary system is still far from rational in the way in which it distributes resources, but the most glaring injustice of Britain's unacceptable net contribution was resolved by that agreement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley played it right. She argued, she argued hard, and she signed once she had a good agreement for Britain and for Europe.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall get on a bit before I give way to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Or take the impetus for the single market through the Single European Act to make the job of selling throughout the Community easier for all businesses in the Community, to increase the choice and the quality available to all the Community's 340 million consumers. Once again, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley argued, argued hard, and signed once she had a good agreement.

I am told that there were 29 outstanding issues on the day that my right hon. Friend went to the summit in Luxembourg in 1985. She sorted those issues out—perhaps, I do not know, with a little help from her Foreign Secretary of the day—and the agreement was signed. We are still in the arguing stage before Maastricht, but we hope that the rest will follow and the result will be satisfactory.

The last example was the opening up of the Community to the emerging democracies in central and eastern Europe. That began as soon as the east began to choose democracy in 1989. It is now accepted by everybody that we started with trade and co-operation agreements—limited but important access to Community markets to countries which had overnight lost their biggest market in the Soviet Union—but as democracy and the market economy took hold, more help was needed. My right hon. Friend proposed the association agreements. I pressed for an early completion. We obtained a political commitment to finish negotiations in time for their entry into force in the new year, and those negotiations—with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia—are on course.

I have used those three examples because they are examples of undoubtedly good achievements by the Community which stem from our initiatives, and our persistent pressure, in this country.

Mr. Skinner: I think that we ought to have the full picture before the Foreign Secretary concludes what he has to say about initiatives. The truth is that, although we were indeed promised barrel loads of money back when the last Prime Minister went to negotiate about the money, this country has paid more than £14,000 million to the common market since that date. The United Kingdom taxpayer has been handing over money to the tune of £18 a week for every family in Britain to prop up the discredited common agriculture policy. Let us have the full story, not just part of it.

Mr. Hurd: That is the hon. Gentleman's speech. What his party's Front-Bench spokesmen propose would increase the burden substantially, while the actions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley would lighten it substantially. The hon. Gentleman's intervention has proved my point.

The Leader of the Opposition described us as being stuck in the defensive mud. I think that I have proved that that is not true, but I fear that something similar can be said about the amazing speech that the right hon. Gentleman made yesterday. At times, it seemed as though Conservative Members were pouring salvoes into a grievously stricken vessel. Listening to the right hon. Gentleman, I came to the conclusion that we would never hear him make a good speech about Europe, partly because he finds the subject matter confusing—I do not criticise him for that; I often share the feeling—but mainly because he is fatally weighed down by his own past. The vessel is waterlogged before it even leaves the harbour.

Labour has changed its policy on Europe seven times in recent years. It might have been expected that, according

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to the rules of mere chance, Labour Members would light on some good arguments at some stage. Not at all: they are consistent only in that all their arguments are wrong.

When the Community was anathema to Labour its most attractive facets were the ones that it attacked and detested, such as the commitment to freer trade and competition. Three years ago, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that the Single European Act was a

"breathtaking reduction in British sovereignty which the Labour party fought tooth and nail to prevent."

Today, he is about to call for a breathtaking reduction in British sovereignty which the Labour party will fight tooth and nail to surrender.

What attract both the right hon. Member for Gorton and the Leader of the Opposition, now that they have learnt to love the Community, are precisely the aspects of some Commissioners' instincts that are the most unlovable and the most dangerous for Britain—the itch to intervene in industry, the itch to regulate at the expense of jobs and the itch to impose worker representatives on company boards. The Labour party rejected the Community for the wrong reasons, and now embraces it for the wrong reasons. That is why Labour is wholly unconvincing on the subject—incredible, even—both at home and abroad.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What is the Foreign Secretary going to do about my itch to bring about a solution to the problem of RECHAR additionality?

Mr. Hurd: I knew that the hon. Gentleman would raise that point, and I am therefore particularly glad that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury dealt with it at length in his winding-up speech last night. My hon. Friend advised the hon. Gentleman—particularly as a Scottish Member—to address himself to Commissioner Millan, and to try to get him to change his indefensible policy.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: I would rather get on. The hon. Gentleman has already had a go this afternoon.

While I am being a tiny bit controversial, I should like to add a word on the proposals for a referendum simply to underline the answer given earlier by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Naturally, there have often been arguments in the House about referendums. I am instinctively against them. In our parliamentary democracy, the line of democratic accountability runs from the Government to the House and from the House to those who send us here. If we take ourselves out of that line because the decisions are particularly important or difficult, it seems that we are dodging part of our responsibility.

I respect the counter-argument, although I disagree with those who say that a referendum should be part of our constitution. Those, such as Dicey, who favour that argue consistently that it should be a considered change and that there is no case for introducing a referendum because of a particular issue.

Nowhere has the case against introducing a referendum on a particular issue been argued with more energy than in the House on 11 March 1975 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley. She led us into the Lobby against Harold Wilson's device of a referendum on Europe. In that speech, she quite correctly said that Dicey could be used on both sides of the argument. She also quoted Lord Attlee's saying that the referendum was a device of "demagogues and dictators". I am just a little sad that my right hon. Friend seems to have become a shade wobbly on the subject since then.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Does not my right hon. Friend understand that, at the time of the discussions on whether we should enter the European Community, it was possible for an elector to vote for a party that had a chance of forming a Government which would reject the proposition or a Government that would accept it? Does not my right hon. Friend understand that at the next general election the voter who wishes to vote against the proposed treaties will not be able to find a party to vote for that has a remote hope of forming a Government?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my right hon. Friend is historically correct. In 1975, the leaders of all parties were in favour of a yes vote. Therefore, the position is not as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) described it.

I am not dismissing the argument, because it is a serious argument that has been suggested seriously. As I have said, I believe that in a parliamentary democracy the line of accountability runs as I have described it. It runs through us and we are responsible to people who can, rightly, throw us out if we pursue policies with which they disagree. However mighty, parties have to pay careful attention to that.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend accept that since we have already had a referendum on the European Community and referendums on devolution, referendums are now part of the British constitution?

Mr. Hurd: I may be wrong, but I suspect that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) may have joined me in voting against the idea of referendums on those matters. For the reasons that I have given, I do not accept that they are part of our constitution. I do not think that it is the right way to proceed in a parliamentary democracy.

We shall face decisions and tough choices at Maastricht. Part of the value of the debate is the chance that it gives to send a signal—I hope a clear signal—of the chief concerns of the British Parliament as we all enter the final stages of this negotiation.

We want to take advantage of the negotiations, not defensively, but to press the Community down the path that we think most sensible. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, that means putting ourselves at the heart of the Community, persuading different partners on different issues and using a style and a language that make it possible to persuade others of the value of our ideas for the future of Europe. I want to illustrate that with three principles that we regard as necessary for the Community and on which I believe the House will agree. We want to ensure the rule of law and a level playing field, we want to strengthen Europe's voice worldwide and we want an open and liberal Community.

I want first to consider the proper application of Community law. When we agree in this country to do something, we stick by that agreement. When the Community agrees new legislation, we have procedures in

this country which turn that legislation quickly into British law and our Government and courts enforce it. One of the main criticisms of the Community often heard in the House, and one that I have heard in my constituency, is that this country acts in that way, but others do not.

Our record in obeying our legal commitments is second to none. The most recent figures released by the Commission show only one European Court of Justice judgment outstanding against us. In delivering a recent judgment, the court referred to Britain's exemplary conduct in complying with EC legislation. We would regard it as progress if others began to compete with our record. Some lag far behind—12 for Germany, 13 for Belgium and 37 for Italy.

At present, the only sanction against a member state that fails to comply with a judgment from the European Court of Justice is to bring that state before the court again. The present draft treaty will give substance to that second appearance by allowing the court to impose a fine on any member state found not to have taken the necessary measures to comply with its earlier judgment. That was our proposal and it is accepted. It will give the court the teeth that it needs to ensure compliance, and none too soon.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): That is an important point and according to a recent judgment, individuals may now be able to sue Governments who fail to carry out directives. What would happen if the House genuinely voted not to accept a directive? Would the British Government then be fined?

Mr. Hurd: A judgment was given against the Italians a few days ago, but I have not yet had an opportunity to study it.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Do not all supranational bodies of an incipiently federal nature have some form of power to enforce the overall decisions of the group, whether through an international police force or international army? There is no suggestion that the Community could ever use force to enforce its decisions against a member state.

Mr. Hurd: That is why the proposal that I have just outlined is important. It gives the court the power to fine for the first time. If my hon. Friend is suggesting a corps of Euro Commissioners to enforce that, that would be a new and interesting suggestion, but I am not sure whether he is suggesting that.

We must also strengthen the protection of the citizen. Chancellor Kohl is quite right to argue, as he did at the last European summit, that the European citizen needs better protection against the international criminal, the Mafia, the drug trafficker and the terrorist. When I was Home Secretary, we proposed a European drugs intelligence unit, and that is now being set up. The German Chancellor wanted to go further and establish a Europol. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, we agree with that and we will support him. However, there is no need to impose a Community structure on that European work among police forces and agencies. It is important to concentrate on the substance of the matter, which is the protection of the citizen, rather than on the procedure and jurisdiction.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I promise to give way to my hon. Friend later.

One of the most difficult problems that Europe has to cope with is the increase in asylum seekers. In order to protect the sysem and to safeguard genuine refugees, we must prevent abuse of the system—hence my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's Asylum Bill. In recent years, there has been an increase in such abuse. When an applicant fails in one country, he crosses a frontier and tries again. Last year, intergovernmentally—with agreement between Governments—we agreed the Dublin convention to put an end to that, but we must do more.

The 1951 United Nations convention was not written and ratified to protect the opportunists. The problem is a European problem. We want to see the Twelve better equipped to respond, with better co-ordination, but not central direction.

All that comes within the work of the Trevi group, in which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary joins. The work of that group shows that intergovernmental co-operation is no less effective and no less European for being outside the framework of the treaty of Rome—outside the jurisdiction of the European Court. The Community—the Commission—does not need competence in order for an initiative to work.

Let us concentrate on the substance. I believe that police forces work best together when they work directly together. In any case, given our differing legal traditions and judicial systems, the case is simply not made for generalised supranational enforcement. Member states need to remain responsible for law and order on their territory. It is certainly right for there to be more intense international co-operation. We have a long way to go before we can be sure that that is adequate.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary referred to citizenship, will he say clearly whether the Government support the proposal on page 15 of the Dutch draft article A? It proposes that

"European union citizenship is hereby established"?

It would help the House if the Government would make it clear whether they support or do not support the establishment of European union citizenship for all member states.

Mr. Hurd: It is in addition to, and support does not in any way detract from, British citizenship. The only proposals are ones on which I gave evidence to the Select Committee the other day and which relate to the right of EC citizens in local and European elections, but not in national elections.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the views of some members of the European Parliament that Europol and the work of the Trevi group could be scrutinised by that body. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that they are adequately scrutinised by the Select Committees of the House and that that is the right place for them to be scrutinised and for their work to be reported to the House?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The point I am trying to make in this part of my speech and, indeed, in our negotiations is that it is perfectly possible and often better for that kind of European working together to be based on co-operation between Governments, and therefore based on responsibility to national Parliaments, rather than under the structure of

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the treaty of Rome. The same principle applies to the strengthening of European foreign policy. We hope that there will be agreement about that at Maastricht.

Already, the practice in the Community goes beyond the co-ordination envisaged and enshrined in the Single European Act. We often commit ourselves—not because of any legal obligation but because of common sense—to joint action in many matters because it makes sense to put the combined weight of Europe behind our shared objectives. Once we have agreed on that in a particular subject, we honour the commitments that we have decided.

There is great advantage for us in that system and in making sure that our partners do the same. There is positive advantage in securing obligations on our partners in cases where we have decided unanimously—by consensus—to work together. That is the essence of the proposal on the table.

There are no grand schemes to do away with national initiatives, and there is no attempt to cast aside the national interest in this sphere, in the hope that an undefined European interest can take its place.

No one, for example, is proposing a system that would prevent Britain from liberating the Falklands, or Belgium and France from sending paratroops to Zaire to rescue their fellow citizens. No one is proposing that any substantial decision on common foreign and security policy should be taken except unanimously. Our aim is a common foreign and security policy on issues where we find that we agree unanimously, always allowing for national freedom of action in other matters.

No one is attempting to foist a foreign policy on us. The principle of joint action decided by unanimity is accepted. What is proposed—this was discussed yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—is that secondary decisions—decisions to implement measures decided unanimously—might be taken by majority voting, to speed things up.

We are not persuaded that the distinction between the original decision, which everyone agrees must be taken unanimously, and the implementing measures can be made to stick. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) criticised a proposal, and I am trying to answer the point that he raised.

I endorse the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on that subject yesterday, with which my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley agreed. He said that there was no satisfactory answer to the question of how one distinguishes between the original measure taken by unanimity and the implementing or secondary measure, adding:

> "The onus must be on those who want to change the existing arrangements to justify that change. Thus far they have not managed to do so."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 276.]

That is the Government's position, which I explained to our partners when we were negotiating at the Dutch seaside last week.

As to defence, the story is straightforward. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spelled it out yesterday. NATO will remain. Europe will not replace or duplicate NATO's arrangements for the defence of Europe. There are, as my right hon. Friend said, still differences on that, but there is also much common ground, and it has increased as a result of the NATO summit a week ago.

Last month, we put forward with the Italians ideas on European defence, proposing that the Western European Union should be vehicle for a European defence identity. That idea is now accepted by our partners. We proposed also ways in which the WEU could be linked to the alliance and to the common foreign and security policy, in order to strengthen Europe's defence capacity within and outside the alliance.

There is not agreement yet on the nature of that policy, and that will be crucial in reaching a general agreement at Maastricht.

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Yesterday, the Prime Minister confirmed in the House that the Franco-German proposal had suffered a serious rebuff at Rome. Is the Foreign Secretary assured, as a result of further bilaterals with the French, that—even within those parameters that the Prime Minister was largely responsible for drawing up in Rome—the French may not yet return at Maastricht with a further attempt to separate Europe's defence responsibilities from NATO?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot answer that question, but if they do, we shall resist it. The defence principles under which we are operating are absolutely clear. They have been set out several times, including at Rome, by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There are three of them, and I believe that they will serve to reassure the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy). First, any common defence policy must be genuinely compatible with NATO. It is not enough simply to say that NATO should be preserved. Any proposals for European forces should not cut across NATO's sole responsibility for the defence of NATO territory.

Secondly, the WEU, which is the instrument of the European defence identity, should be linked in different ways to foreign policy and to the alliance, but be subordinate to neither. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister emphasised that point yesterday.

Thirdly—this is of particular importance to the United States—European defence co-operation should not marginalise our other allies, or present them with decisions simply to take or to leave. Anyone who knows about such matters—such as the hon. Member for Attercliffe, or my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East—knows that those points are crucial, and we intend to hold by them.

The third objective of an open and liberal Europe, which I sketched at the beginning of my remarks, is one on which my right hon. and hon. Friends are also wholly at one. To maintain a liberal Europe, we must maintain the free market thrust of existing Community policies—in particular, the preservation of the single market programme, backed by the tough new competition powers, which Sir Leon Brittan is exercising most effectively. If Community competence is to be extended, we must avoid any interventionist tilt.

If we are to maintain an open Europe, we must ensure also that, after Maastricht, the Community maintains and expands a welcoming approach to enlargement. We welcome the prospect of early accession negotiations for Austria and Sweden, which are themselves a powerful

reason for concluding the Maastricht conference if we can. I hope that Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslavakia will be in by at least the end of the decade.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): And Norway?

Mr. Hurd: Norway has not yet made a decision on whether she wants to enter the Community. She held a referendum that went the wrong way, but my hon. Friend is right in thinking that Norway may find an opportunity to reconsider. I do not yet know.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend passed rather quickly over the question of the internal market. Will he return to that point for a moment? Many people think that proper enforcement of internal market legislation is of prime importance now. That is what business men want. What concerns me is that the Community appears to be moving on to new programmes before it has successfully completed its existing agenda.

Mr. Hurd: There is a lot of truth in that. That is one reason why I said at the beginning of my remarks that the intergovernmental conference has come too soon. In two or three years, we shall have completed our work on the single market. I agree that the existing presidency, the next, and the British presidency at the very end of 1992 ought not to forget that the overwhelming need is to complete the single market. I hope that the proposal that I outlined concerning enforcement by the European Court on lagging or non-complying states will help to deal with the problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) mentioned.

As to enlargement, Britain benefited after some delay from the fact that the European Community is bound by the treaty of Rome to be open to European newcomers, and we are clear that it is our duty and in our real interest to ensure that the Community's benefits are available to all states qualifying for membership.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: May I move on just a little, and then give way?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The point will have gone by then. Earlier, my right hon. Friend dealt comprehensively with what would happen if Governments failed in the European Court of Justice. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) raised the question of the internal market. How does my right hon. Friend propose to stamp out the fraud that disfigures the Common Market?

Mr. Hurd: That is one area in which we should encourage the European Parliament to be more active. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spelled that out yesterday, and I will not follow in his footsteps. However, that issue is one on which the European Parliament could quite properly concentrate its energies. The proposals sketched by my right hon. Friend yesterday are designed to equip the European Parliament in that respect.

Our basic concern in the negotiations is flexibility. We want—this intention is reaffirmed in document after document—to transform relations as a whole among member states into a European union. Peoples grow closer when their Governments remove the barriers between them, not when their Governments try to dissolve into one.

I believe that the House is pretty well at one on that point, which is crucial to the negotiations. Some things are best done by the Community. Others are best done by co-operating between Governments. That distinction is crucial. On 30 September, in the negotiations on political union in which I am involved, there was an important debate on that point. If things turn out right, that debate may turn out to have been a turning point.

At that time, 10 member states, coming to the argument with different ideas, all concluded not to proceed with a draft put forward by the Dutch presidency, based on the proposition that all the changes agreed by the intergovernmental conferences should be agreed under one heading only—the Community, the treaty of Rome, and the institutions of the Community. The Dutch presidency wanted to bring it altogether into one pillar. The Dutch made that proposal in good faith, but a big majority of member states agreed on 30 September that that approach would not lead to a result at Maastricht. That may turn out to have been a crucial meeting.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we accept that in some areas action is best taken by the Community under the treaty of Rome. Such matters include the environment, international transport policy and external trade, which is already undertaken by the Community. But in others——

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I want to get on.

In other areas, however, such as foreign policy and law and order issues, it makes more sense to strengthen co-operation between individual Governments, who have to keep the last word for themselves and their Parliaments. The latest draft, based on the Luxembourg draft, preserves that distinction. It is based on the concept of separate pillars—the Community within the treaty of Rome, co-operation and joint action in foreign and security policy, co-operation in interior and justice matters, all under the guidance of the European Council.

The last draft, which one could call the draft of the pillars, is far from perfect. Many right hon. and hon. Members yesterday correctly drew attention to its imperfections. We cannot accept it as it stands, for several important reasons which were spelled out yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. However, its basic structure is right—and that basic structure creates sadness among true federalists. We saw that in a speech made last week by the President of the European Parliament.

The draft now on the table is not a draft that provides for federalism. That point was made eloquently, after I had sketched these notes, by the President of the European Commission yesterday when he criticised the present state of the negotiations, precisely because they were based on the principle that Europe could work well by means of co-operation between Governments. From our point of view, that is a considerable advance, but it is a sadness to him. The question for Maastricht is whether those two points can be reconciled.

Sir Russell Johnston *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but this must be the last time.

Sir Russell Johnston: As the Foreign Secretary is talking about central Community institutions, does he agree that a big gap in the Government motion is that there is no reference whatsoever to the European Parliament?

Mr. Hurd: The gap was filled by the Prime Minister's speech yesterday, which spelled out in some detail the role that we foresee for the European Parliament in non-legislative areas, such as dealing with fraud, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), and the possibility of the negative assent procedure and what that should cover.

The remaining reference to a "federal vocation" which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) criticised yesterday, is an attempt to look forward wistfully to a day when we and others might have changed our minds and be ready to accept federal proposals. We do not ask—we cannot ask—any of our partners to renounce their hopes, but we are not ready to say that we will share them either now or in the future. In Europe there are many mansions and many ways of working together.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman because I referred to him.

Mr. Shore: Does that mean that the reference in article W-whatever not only to a federal future, but to a new intergovernmental conference in 1996 for that very purpose, will be expunged?

Mr. Hurd: There are no objections to looking at those matters again—*[Interruption.]* No. What would be objectionable would be to prejudge that now. Therefore, the present draft of the review clause attempts to prejudge it in a wistful way, and we cannot accept that prejudgment.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister covered the subject headings of the negotiations in detail yesterday. I should like to finish with my answer to the question that was asked yesterday by several right hon. and hon. Members. Indeed, they answered it themselves. It is the crucial question, "What kind of Europe do we, the British Government, seek?"

I usually see us as the craftsmen rather than the visionaries of Europe. At meeting after meeting, we are usually concerned with the practicalities, with the next step and the next few years, rather than with the larger scene of the indefinite future, but it is right that, from time to time, we should raise our sights and look into that future. Indeed, a debate of this substance should make us all think of the real interests of the constituents whom we are here to serve. I am quite clear that our constituents want to preserve our distinct character as a nation. Whatever the Opposition may now say, we respect and share that view.

Our constituents have other expectations that they expect us to do our best to realise on their behalf. They want a rising standard of living, brought about by investment and through open markets. They might ask, if not tomorrow then the next day, whether that would be compatible with standing aside while others build an economic system without us. This is relevant to the points made yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about economic and monetary union. Our constituents undoubtedly want Britain to have effective influence in the world. I am clear that, in many but not all sectors, that influence is best exerted in concert with our European partners.

As has often been said in such debates—this was expressed well by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell)—we have to help forward the new democracies of central and eastern Europe. We have to try to rescue the peoples of Yugoslavia—to the extent that we can—from their present chaos and bloodshed. We have to use any influence that is available to us to prevent the peoples of the Soviet Union going down a similar path towards anarchy and bankruptcy. To be honest, we cannot yet be sure how effective we will be in dealing with those problems by acting together, but one thing is absolutely certain—we shall be ineffective or worse if we try to work apart or in rivalry. For heaven's sake, that is one of the lessons of this century, and it has been dinned into me over and over again by the experiences of the past two years.

Our constituents want clean air, clean rivers, forests and seas and they accept—overwhelmingly, I believe—that that means new kinds of work with our neighbours who share that air and that water. Our constituents want better protection against the international criminal. They want order to be introduced into the questions of immigration and asylum. Again, that means more intense work together—not under the treaty or the institutions of the Community, but between Community partners with similar problems.

The question is not whether that European work together is needed for our constituents and their interests, but how it should be organised. That is what the negotiations are or should be about. We are looking for the right way of working together, and that right way will vary from sector to sector and from policy to policy. That is the sensible way of looking at the deepening of the Europe of 12. At the same time, we have to prepare urgently to widen that Europe until it becomes a Europe that welcomes all those in our continent who share our commitment to political democracy and the market economy.

Several right hon. and hon. Members have spent more time at Community meetings and at meetings of political co-operation than I have, but I have done enough to have my share of memories of frustration and exasperation as the discussions go on and on, hour after hour, day after day.

I am no blind worshipper of the Community and the way it works, but I recognise that we are trying to do something that is unique in history. There are no precedents in the history of, say, the United States, Germany, the Soviet Union or Canada that can serve us. We are trying, in the interests of our constituents, to bring together ancient and diverse countries. We are trying to find ways of pooling our efforts and our energies without smothering that diversity.

That is difficult. It has never been done before and there are no pathfinders. It is not at all surprising that progress sometimes seems unsteady and that much argument accompanies that progress. But the need to find that way is compelling—in all the sectors that I have mentioned and in others. If we neglect that need or pretend that it does not exist; if we claim that isolation from that common European work is feasible or profitable for us, in my view

we are not defending the interests of our constituents, but deserting them. We are not preserving the strength of this country, but weakening it.

I cannot tell the House—no one can—whether we shall succeed at Maastricht. If too much doctrine is pressed upon us, we shall have to say that we cannot accept it, but I am clear that we are right to make the effort, as has been set out in the motion tabled by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. We are right to put forward our arguments with all the persuasive force that we can muster and, with the support of the House tonight, we are right to work strenuously for those arguments to prevail.

4.59 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): A debate such as this imposes a special obligation on those who take part in it. We must define not simply the position that the Government should take at Maastricht and not simply the outcome that we want. We must define the Europe that we want to see far beyond Maastricht and how we believe that the Maastricht summit can assist in achieving that Europe.

Let us be clear that we should not think merely of the Europe of the Twelve. Twenty years ago, the European Economic Community was the Six. With the adhesion of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland, it became the Nine. Since then, three further countries have joined. Four more have applied to join, including Sweden and Austria. Their membership, which cannot and should not be long delayed, will surely be followed by that of the remaining European Free Trade Association countries. By the middle of this decade, the European Community may be 18. It could soon afterwards be 20 or more.

The narrow European Economic Community of the 1960s is developing into a wider European Community which could eventually stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the Arctic Circle to the Bosphorus. It will be a wider Europe that is a community of sovereign states not artificially welded into a super-state. It will be a wider Europe that is a social Europe, with the protections of the social charter.

It will be a Europe that recognises that transnational commerce and industry, with all their powers, are tolerable only if there are effective mechanisms to safeguard employed people—men and women, their families and retired people—who might otherwise have no defence against the demands and requirements of vast corporations operating on a continental scale. That wider European Community will be a different Community from the one that we know today. Even if it is desirable, it will not be possible to hold it together through the tight control of a bureaucratic Commission.

National sovereignty and popular sovereignty in a Europe so wide will require not only more effective national Parliaments but Europewide instruments to express and administer Europe. Such a Europe will require more deeply entrenched and pervasive democracy at both national and European levels. That is what the participants at Maastricht ought to think about and what the House should direct the Government to think about.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will give way in a moment.

How can an unprecedented association of nations which come together voluntarily govern itself effectively, responsibly and responsively?

Mr. Sayeed: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the agenda of the United Kingdom civil service is set by Ministers of the Crown, whereas the European Commission has the sole right of initiative. In other words, an unelected body decides what it will consider. Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that acceptable or democratic? If not, what would the Opposition do?

Mr. Kaufman: It is neither acceptable nor democratic. In a moment I shall say what the Opposition propose. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening on that point.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I should be grateful for some clarification. I have been looking at the Opposition amendment. I have had a little difficulty with it. It is probably my fault. There are 31 lines in it, which makes it somewhat longer than the Government motion, which the right hon. Gentleman criticised. The Opposition amendment talks about achieving a single currency as an essential foundation. Does that mean that every Opposition Member who supports the amendment tonight is fully in favour of a single currency?

Mr. Kaufman: If the hon. Gentleman would be good enough to read the amendment carefully, he might conceivably understand it. If he does not understand it, I guarantee that if my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) catches the eye of the Chair, even the hon. Gentleman will be fully educated on the matter.

We say that a wider Europe must be a more democratic Europe. It must be more democratic at every level. On agreed and worked-out policies, one country in the ministerial Council should not be able to hold up the progress of the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will proceed for a moment. If I am not held up too much, I will gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman.

On social and environmental matters, the Labour party believes that there should be qualified majority voting in the ministerial Council, which is composed of a group of men and women already democratically accountable to their national Parliaments.

Mr. Favell: The right hon. Gentleman was a Member of the House in 1975 when the Government, under the leadership of Lord Wilson, recommended a referendum to the people. Indeed, he probably even helped to draft the document "Britain's New Deal in Europe". I believe that at one time he was the Prime Minister's press officer and, indeed, worked in his office. In the document under the heading

"Will Parliament lose its power?"—

Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention. I hope that he will be speedy with it so that we can make progress and that he will not read from the document before him.

Mr. Favell: The document says that no important new policy will be made without the consent of a Minister answerable to the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Gentleman is misquoting.

Mr. Favell: I am not misquoting. The Labour party now departs from that. Is not it right that that departure should be put to the people? Why does his party object to a referendum now, when the right hon. Gentleman supported it then?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman's memory of history is wrong. At that time I was a Member of Parliament. I was a junior Minister and I took advantage of the dispensation which enabled me to vote no in that referendum. But, unlike the hon. Gentleman, I accepted the outcome of the referendum. I voted and expressed my view. The result went against the way in which I cast my vote. As a democrat, I accepted the outcome of the referendum and I see no reason for another.

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No.

The scope of the ministerial Council should be extended. That is why the Labour party believes that common foreign and security policies should be developed. On an ad hoc basis, the Community is already feeling its way towards such common policies. There has been a common approach to South Africa, the middle east and the Salman Rushdie death sentence. Those are contributions towards a common foreign policy. Admirable, if so far unavailing, efforts have been made to end the conflict in Yugoslavia. That approach is an element in the development of a common security policy. It will take some time to work out comprehensive and coherent common foreign and security policies. At that stage, we can consider qualified majority voting on those matters.

The scope of the ministerial Council should not go beyond what is appropriate to the role of the Community and should not usurp the satisfactory work of organisations which already exist. That is why the Labour party opposes a defence role for the Community. First, Europe's defence needs are already satisfactorily met by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which is inherently more effective than any alternative because it includes the transatlantic nations. Secondly, some members of the Community and some applicants—Ireland and Sweden, for example—would find difficulty in being members of a Community with a defence role. Thirdly, a really effective and comprehensive defence structure for the European Community would be viable outside NATO only if it inevitably involved aspirations for a nuclear capacity. The Labour party is opposed absolutely to the creation of a new nuclear power, especially one with 12 or more fingers on the nuclear trigger.

In response to the intervention by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), a more democratic Europe cannot continue to accommodate a non-democratic Commission. That is why we want to make the Commission democratically accountable. Since it cannot be accountable to national Parliaments, it ought to be accountable to the European Parliament. It might be appropriate to give the European Parliament rights of confirmation for Commissioners, and it could be worth considering giving the Parliament rights of recall of Commissioners as well.

The European Parliament should be given further additional powers: powers to initiate proposals for legislation, which would be considered by the Commission and the Council of Ministers; powers of second reading on social and environmental decisions by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not give way, as I have already done so several times. Mr. Speaker has announced how many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

The proposals for the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the Parliament should be part of the negotiating brief for United Kingdom Ministers at Maastricht, as should proposals on economic and monetary union, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) hopes to refer later in the debate. Not only are the proposals right in themselves, but many of them might win support at Maastricht. A positive United Kingdom approach—good for Britain and good for Europe—could win us partners and allies at Maastricht who could support Britain's positive proposals, could associate themselves with us on proposals by others that we oppose, and could be counterparts in the give and take involved in any negotiation.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way because I need a drink of water.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman said that, when he went to the European Parliament in 1987, he was, to say the least, a reluctant European. Could he explain how, in the following five or six years, he has made such a massive transformation? Is it because he is hoping that there will be a socialist Europe?

Mr. Kaufman: It is because I accept democratic change. Whether or not I like Acts passed by this Parliament, if it passes them I accept them. The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), in her wisdom, guillotined the Single European Act through the House and it became an Act of Parliament. I accept the law. That is the reason why I have accepted the changes that have taken place.

Our charge against the Government is that they have next to no positive proposals for Maastricht on the subjects that I have mentioned or on any other subjects. Yesterday, the Prime Minister started his speech by announcing that he would specify "what we can accept" at Maastricht. That is not what the United Kingdom will propose, with the intention of winning acceptance from others, but what we will accept, as proposed by others. He then went on to provide a long list, not of items that we could accept, but of items that we could not accept. His speech was a litany of "we will not accept" and "we will not agree". He used that phraseology over and over again.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) intervened in the Prime Minister's speech and asked him to specify the Government's aims and objectives at Maastricht. The Prime Minister evaded the question and never replied to it. We still do not know what the Government's aims and objectives at Maastricht are.

What about the word "federal"? At Luxembourg in June, the Foreign Secretary got upset when that word was mooted. He said:

"We've got real problems with this."

Last month he changed his attitude. In his offhand way he dismissed "federal" as "only a word". Recently it seems to have been bringing him out in anxiety attacks once again. He skirted warily around it today. He should have seen the face of his right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley when he evaded answering a question about the word "federal". After three ministerial speeches, we still do not know whether the Government would veto a treaty at Maastricht that contained the word "federal". I take it that the Foreign Secretary will give me an answer to that question.

Mr. Hurd: That question has been answered three days running. It was certainly answered by me to the Select Committee, as the right hon. Gentleman, who attended the Committee, will know. It was answered by the Prime Minister yesterday and by me again today. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the answer?"] We could not accept a treaty that contained either a commitment at the beginning to a federal vocation or a review clause at the end—this is the question I have just answered—which implied or stated that the result of the review must be a movement towards federalism. It is perfectly clear.

Mr. Kaufman: We still have not heard from the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No, for the moment they are the Government and they will be at Maastricht, so let us find out what they will do in three weeks.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, I am dealing with the Foreign Secretary, who gave me a circumlocutory reply to a question that I did not ask him. Will the Government veto a draft treaty—[HON. MEMBERS: "Would you?"] This is the Government for the time being. At Maastricht, will the Government veto a treaty that contains the word "federal", yes or no?

Mr. Hurd: We have said yes three times now. The word occurs twice in the present draft and I have explained in some detail why it is not acceptable on either occasion. What would the right hon. Gentleman do in those circumstances? It seemed to be implicit in the speech by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday that the federal vocation is no obstacle to him. Is that true?

Mr. Kaufman: I am not talking about the phrase, "federal vocation". What I asked the right hon. Gentleman—and what he has still not answered—is, would the Government veto a treaty with the word "federal" in it?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No—not the office boy. There have been three interventions——

Several Hon. Members: Give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: There have been three interventions on this matter but the Foreign Secretary has not said yes or no to the question.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely we should check the microphone system in the House. I do not know what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) heard, but I distinctly heard the Foreign Secretary answer yes on several occasions.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me. I can hear most people in the House, including the hon. Lady.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Several Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Kaufman: If the Foreign Secretary is ready to say that he will veto such a treaty, I shall give way to let him do so. The Minister of State is not yet the Foreign Secretary and there is little time left for him to become Foreign Secretary.

Then there is the problem of qualified majority voting on foreign policy issues. In June, the Foreign Secretary told the House that the Government opposed all extensions of qualified majority voting. In his speech in the debate on the Gracious Speech three weeks ago, he changed his tune. He spoke about not liking majority voting on foreign policy "matters of substance" and on "substantial decisions" in foreign policy. He did not completely rule out qualified majority voting on foreign policy issues.

The right hon. Member for Finchley was right yesterday to express concern from her point of view that the Foreign Secretary was a bit wobbly on majority voting. After his speech today, we still do not know where he stands on that matter—not on the draft to which he was referring but on the principle of extended majority voting.

It is ironic that the right hon. Member for Finchley was pitched out of office a year ago today as a direct consequence of that "no, no, no" with which she infuriated the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). Yet under her successor, the Government have not advanced beyond no, no, no. The negative approach of a year ago is unchanged. The Government have made little progress beyond the position that the right hon. Lady set out.

But there is one basic difference. The right hon. Lady said no, no, no out of firm conviction. She said it because she believed it. She challenged everyone—the Community, Parliament and her own party. It may have been war, but in a way it was magnificent. The present Prime Minister says no, no, no, not out of conviction or courage. He says

[Mr. Kaufman]

it not because, like the right hon. Lady, he challenges his party, but because he is afraid of his party—and one could never accuse the right hon. Lady of that.

The motion that the Prime Minister has proposed for decision by the House tonight is intended to be so meaningless that any Tory Member can vote for it while interpreting it to suit himself or herself. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) can vote for it because he is opposed to a single currency, and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) can vote for it while advocating a single currency.

The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) can vote for it while being reluctant to concede any more sovereignty to the Community, and the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East can vote for it because he is in favour of conceding more sovereignty to the Community. It is ironic that those two Members were allies in forcing the Madrid conditions on the exchange rate mechanism on the right hon. Lady and they are now at odds over further developments in the Community, but they can still both vote for this meaningless motion.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: The chairman of the Conservative party can vote for the motion because he is opposed to a referendum, and the right hon. Lady can vote for it because she advocates a referendum. At Question Time today, the Prime Minister, in ruling out a referendum, boasted that the right hon. Lady in her speech yesterday had promised him her full support. After what he has now said about a referendum, he had better watch out. Not only may she offer him her full support, she may say he is unassailable.

The right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East said yesterday that he would vote for the Government because the Prime Minister was clearly determined to follow a path that the right hon. and learned Gentleman favoured. The right hon. Member for Finchley said yesterday that she would vote for the Government because they were following a path that she favoured—in precisely the opposite direction.

This is not a clear path to Maastricht that the Prime Minister has set out. It is a maze in which Tory Members wander blindly, from time to time colliding with each other. When tonight those Tory MPs have all voted for the Prime Minister's motion—for different and often conflicting reasons—the Prime Minister will claim that his motion has given him a mandate for Maastricht, when he stands for nothing at all.

It is as though the Prime Minister is trying to paint a canvas in the style of Georges Seurat, if I may be forgiven for referring to a continental artist. It will be recalled that Seurat was a pointillist who filled his canvas with dots. When he stood back, he could see that he had created a superb landscape with figures. The Prime Minister fills his canvas with dots all right, but when he stands back, all he sees is a mass of dots.

The Prime Minister dare not present a clear picture, because such a picture would annoy some group or other in the Tory party. He cannot look our European partners in the face, because he is preoccupied with looking over his shoulder at his own party. His negotiation at Maastricht is not with fellow members of the Community but with fellow members of the Tory party. The deal he seeks to make at Maastricht is not with the Twelve but with the 1922 Committee.

The right. hon. Member for Blaby blurted out the truth on television on Sunday when he said that what the Government were aiming for was

"what the Conservative party would accept."

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): Characteristically, the right hon. Gentleman has totally misquoted what I said. I said I was confident that the Government would come back from Maastricht with something that was acceptable to the Conservative party. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Kaufman: Not only has the right hon. Gentleman made an idiot of himself by that intervention, but he has achieved the interesting feat of misquoting himself. The words I quoted—

"what the Conservative party would accept"

—come not only from the transcript of "On the Record" but from even holier writ, *The Daily Telegraph*, on Monday.

The Prime Minister claims that he wants to be at the heart of Europe, but his real objective is a bypass operation. The Prime Minister will brandish his meaningless majority after the Division tonight and claim it as a mandate for Maastricht. But this is a Prime Minister uniquely without a mandate. He is Prime Minister not by the vote of the people but by the votes of 185 Tory Members. I saw yesterday how the Prime Minister winced when the right hon. Member for Finchley said:

"our authority comes from the ballot box."—*[Official Report*, 20 November 1991, Vol. 199, c. 291.]

Not only have the people never voted for the Prime Minister at the ballot box: they have consistently and persistently voted against him at the ballot box. The Prime Minister has the worst by-election record in British political history. He is the only Prime Minister in the history of the United Kingdom to have lost every by-election during the period of his premiership. Even the right hon. Member for Finchley did better than that.

The Prime Minister goes to Maastricht without a mandate or an agenda. He goes there talking about paper sovereignty, when the country's real sovereignty is increasingly dependent on the actions of our European Community partners. He proclaims a determination to defend our national currency. Yesterday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had the cheek to intervene in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition on the national currency, when this week has shown that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are powerless to defend our national currency against movements in the markets in Community countries and elsewhere.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, I shall not give way.

Yesterday's *Financial Times* reported:

"An additional factor deterring international investors from becoming involved in UK markets was the perceived disarray in the Conservative party ahead of today's two day Commons debate on Europe".

Successive Chancellors have had to acknowledge that, too often, the parity of the pound and the level of interest rates are determined not in the Treasury or even the Bank of England, but in the Bundesbank. What kind of sovereignty is that?

That is the reality of Europe. We in Europe are all increasingly interdependent, and our sovereignty depends not on empty phrases and petty posturing but on recognition of that interdependent relationship and the part that we play in it. To fail to play a positive part in the deliberations at Maastricht is to surrender Britain's true interests. It is to let others make the decisions while pretending that we are free to stand apart, unscathed and unaffected, when every decision taken without our full participation will affect our country's future, perhaps for generations.

Because the Prime Minister did not have the backbone to call a general election this month, Labour will be absent from Maastricht—*[Interruption.]* That is the only reason. The Prime Minister did not call an election on 7 November, because he knew that he would lose it then. Some time in the first six months of next year, an election must take place. Even this dithering Prime Minister cannot evade it. A Labour Government will be able, therefore, to play some part in the meetings in Portugal between January and June and they will take the chair at the meetings in the United Kingdom from 1 July onwards. By fighting for the ideal of a strong Britain in a wider, deeper and more democratic European Community, that Labour Government will be fighting for a true and meaningful British sovereignty.

5.34 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): The House may think that my views are already well known. If so, it enables me to speak briefly in this great debate and it will avoid the interventions of so many of those who are opposed to me; they already know my views.

When the Prime Minister said, on his appointment, that he wanted Britain to be at the heart of Europe, my heart leaped with joy. That joy was echoed right across Europe. Other European countries said that the new British Government would be positive and co-operative and would put forward proposals for bringing about the completion of the European Community, for which they had been working for the past 40 years. I believe that that is the Prime Minister's intention, which is why I shall strongly support him tonight. I also believe that at the conference he will use all his persuasiveness to enable the European Community to move ahead.

I have no desire to smear or jeer at the Opposition and the fact that they have now declared themselves fully in support of the Community, because that is a matter of intense pleasure to me. They recognise full well that, if that had happened in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, the story of this country in Europe and of the Community would have been different. However, that is history. Today we must welcome the fact that the three major parties in this country all agree about the importance of the Community.

I regard it from the point of view of the importance to our people, our country and Europe as a whole. I confess that I sometimes wonder whether the thought of Europe as a whole is in some people's minds, particularly when we discuss our friends in the Community and their actions. Some of them do not always stick to the regulations as we should like. Although we are better than most, we are not entirely immune to that accusation. No development is helped by accusations and counter accusations between members of the Community.

I welcome what the Prime Minister said in his speech. He began by referring back to the summit in Paris in October 1972, when the House had already agreed to our membership but before we had become members. That was to happen on 1 January 1973. He pointed out, quite rightly, that at that summit the Heads of Government had all committed themselves to the future of the Community. He quoted in particular the text of the communiqué on the question of economic and monetary union, where we all affirmed

"the determination of the Member States of the enlarged European Communities irreversibly to achieve the economic and monetary Union".

That was 20 years ago, and what is more, we set the way to achieve it.

The subjects with which we dealt at that time where widespread. We dealt not only with economic and monetary union, but with regional policy. The British were responsible for introducing regional policy, which has been of great benefit to the regions of this country. I am pleased that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has now announced that the Government are to have a strategy for industry, which is a suitable vehicle for regional development.

We also dealt with social policy because we believed strongly in it. Herr Brandt wished to include in the communiqué the fact that trade union members of boards would be permitted because it had been so successful in his country, which was already the most successful economy in Europe. We went on to industrial, scientific and technological policy and also dealt with environmental policy. In 1972 at the Stockholm conference, Britain was to take the lead on environmental policy. The then Secretary of State for the Environment led that conference on the protection of the environment.

There was then the question of energy policy and external relations. The communiqué concluded—this is the point that I wished to make—with the reinforcement of institutions. The final paragraph said:

"The Heads of State or Government, having set themselves the major objective of transforming, before the end of the present decade"—

that was the 1970s—

"and with the fullest respect for the Treaties already signed, the whole complex of the relations of Member States into a European Union".

It was a question not of economic, political or monetary union but of complete European union. That has been the objective of the other countries in the Community ever since.

Mr. Tebbit: I particularly want to help my right hon. Friend recollect what he said in the House on 25 February 1970, which was:

"What is more, those members of the Community who want a federal system, but who know the views of Her Majesty's Government and the Opposition parties here are prepared to forgo their federal desires so that Britain should be a member and take part in political consultation and co-ordination with them."—*[Official Report,* 25 February 1970; Vol. 796, c. 1221.]

If my right hon. Friend was so keen for the members to forgo their federal destination, why is he now so keen that they should take it up?

Mr. Heath: I shall deal with the question of federalism because I know that it is an obsession of my right hon. Friend.

[Mr. Heath]

I welcomed what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had to say yesterday. He was right to emphasise that we have had 20 years to examine the issues and make a complete decision on them.

With regard to economic and monetary union, I wish to address the issue of a single currency. My right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister signed the treaty for the single market. It must have been quite clear—any economist could have stated it at the time—that if we had a single market with all the obstructions and difficulties removed, there was no alternative to a single currency. That was quite plain to see at the time.

Mr. Budgen: Rubbish.

Mr. Heath: I am accustomed to my hon. Friend shouting, "Rubbish"—he does it constantly, but what he says bears no resemblance to the truth or the facts of life. No great economy in the world today has more than a single currency. Let us consider the two greatest—the United States and Japan. Both have single currencies. What is more, we have made various suggestions in the past two to three years for avoiding a single currency, not one of which has stood the test of examination—and they will not do so. Therefore, there is bound to be a single currency, and the remaining question relates to the way in which and the time when that single currency is to be introduced.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that he will not be bullied or forced into accepting a single currency. He has left the position open so that he is able to accept it willingly. I am glad that he has done so, and the sooner the time comes for us to accept that single currency, the better. One factor that reassures me at present is that various of my friends are talking about a time schedule, which will not exist. It will be shortened at every stage as we make developments in the Community.

It is in the interests of our businesses to have a single currency. Imagine what would happen if the rest of the Community had a single currency, and we were the only country without it. What would happen to our business men and our investment? The consequences would be unthinkable. Our business men are frank and recognise that if they are to take the opportunities that the Community offers, they must be part of that single currency and its machinery.

How can we expect to make the City of London the financial centre of the Community if we are outside a single currency? It would just not be feasible. How can we expect the City of London to be the centre of insurance and other activities in the Community if this country is outside the Community's currency? That would be unimaginable. Those are the facts of life with which we must deal.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No. Well, if my hon. Friend will refrain from describing my simple utterances as "rubbish", I shall give way.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps my sedentary remarks were somewhat rude.

Will my right hon. Friend explain how it is that the Japanese financial markets are so successful when they trade in other currencies, and how they find it possible to trade in other countries so successfully?

Mr. Heath: Many foreign exchanges trade in other currencies, but that is not what happens in manufacturing businesses, which have to use the people who trade in the currencies. It would be impossible for London to be the financial centre of a Community if London did not share that single currency.

It is held up that we cannot devote any more sovereignty to such issues. We have pooled sovereignty in the Community. We all knew that in doing so we would have a say over other people's sovereignty. Sometimes a majority decision and sometimes a unanimous one gave us a say in other countries' sovereignty. That process will continue to develop, and rightly so, because it is of benefit to the people of this country. It will help our country, our nation and Europe as whole.

When we joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, of which we heard much earlier today, we gave it the whole of our sovereignty in the case of war. The words in the NATO treaty made it clear that an attack on one was an attack on all. It did not state that a royal commission should be set up to examine the position or that we should have a chat about co-operation. We made a firm commitment that, all the time that we were in NATO, an attack on one would be an attack on all. There cannot be a greater contribution of sovereignty than that, and the Community is not asking for anything like that at present. Let us not continue the perpetual attack on sovereignty as the reason why we should not develop the Community.

I am strongly in favour of more democracy in the Community. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that it is a bureaucratic Brussels—the common cry. We all have bureaucracies, and Brussels happens to have a more competent bureaucracy than most others in the world. We make a considerable contribution to it, which is why it is so successful in making proposals?

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No.

How could the Community possibly have made the progress that it has in just 40 years unless it had had a central organisation to put forward proposals? I believe that the European Parliament should be given more powers as soon as possible.

I quite understand that some right hon. and hon. Members may hate the idea of another organisation dealing with the affairs of the Community. However, as the Community has the power and we contribute the sovereignty, it follows rightly and naturally that the European Parliament should have those powers. Those who are opposed to it cannot have it both ways. They cannot accuse the Community of being undemo-cratic while refusing to grant any democratic powers to its organisations. That is why democratic development is necessary.

The Government have taken a firm line on the social charter. I strongly support the Prime Minister in what he is doing at the conference. However, I ask the Conservative party to give a second thought to the social charter. Ever since Disraeli, the Conservative party has been proud of what it has done for the social services. I

believe that we should continue that development in Europe. What is more, we have said that the other countries must not compete unfairly.

We must not allow that accusation to be levelled at us. They could say that any capitalist can repress the wages of young workers without limitation and accuse us of unfairness. What happens when, by the time workers are 20 or 21 they are sacked so that firms can take on the next generation of young people? We all have constituency interests in the subject. In my constituency I find that older workers are sacked so that companies can take on lower-paid, young workers—that does not constitute a healthy society. The Prime Minister should take another look at the social charter.

With regard to immigration and similar matters, customs duties are being abolished inside the Community. Immigration inside the Community is covered by free movement and it is up to us in the Community to arrive at an arrangement about immigration into it.

There are undoubted problems. We have the problem of those who want to come from Africa and the Asian continent to this country. Our Community partners, especially Italy and France, have the problem of those in Muslim and African countries who want to cross the Mediterranean and enter the Community. We all face such problems, but they can be sorted out jointly by the members of the Community. There is no reason to say that such matters can be left to one side.

Now for the European Free Trade Association. The British created EFTA in an attempt to break up the Community. Neither the Labour Government nor, in their early years, the Conservative Government were prepared to join the Community and in 1958 we set up EFTA with its seven member countries. It did not break up the Community. The Community laughed at us and the only people who suffered were the British, because the smaller member countries said, "We are poor and weak." But they were much richer than we were. Those countries asked us to do this and that for them. I sat through innumerable EFTA meetings at which that was always the theme.

When we went into the Community, we made a good arrangement for the EFTA countries. Denmark wanted to join, as did Norway, but it was defeated on a referendum. Eire engaged in negotiations. Now the EFTA countries want to join the Community, not because it is a free trade area or because they want to turn it into one, but because they see it as a complete Community. The Swedes, the Austrians and the Swiss—they above all—want a complete Community and do not want to see it disintegrate into a purely free trade area of the type that they are leaving.

How can that be done? As I know only too well, negotiations take time and it cannot be done tomorrow. However, after 1992, negotiations can begin and it should be possible for those countries to become full members. That also has a relationship to defence, with which I shall deal in a moment. The Foreign Secretary has rightly said that central European countries should be welcomed when they are ready. That means economically and politically ready. They must be democratic in the fullest sense of the word, and must be able to take their place in what will be a single market by the time they join.

Those are big requirements for people who have been suppressed for 40 or 50 years and who have no idea at the moment of how to run a market economy. Some of them are finding the utmost difficulty in establishing a democratic political society. People who say, "Bring them in tomorrow or the wall of wealth is being used against them," are talking fantastic nonsense. As I have told the House before, it took us 11 years after the end of the second world war—six years of Labour government and five years of Conservative government—to abolish the restrictions that had been set up to carry on the war. I remember that well because there was a blazing row between Harold Macmillan and Anthony Eden about whether it should be done.

After their dictators died, Spain and Portugal took 10 years before they were able to say that they felt ready to join the European Community. If we asked the central European countries to come in today as full members, they would be swept off the face of Europe. There is nothing that we want to buy from them because those countries have all been under Soviet domination. However, they have seen—as the east Germans saw in west Germany—what is available to the rest of us, and they want to buy it.

The President of the United States is not justified in saying, "Do these things in a year and we will help you." It is not feasible for them to be done in a year. British business men who have been to central European countries and those of us who have travelled to most of them and spoken to their leaders know about the utmost difficulty they are having in changing to a new system. However, there will come a time when we should welcome them to the Community.

Mr. Skinner: I am listening carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. I was here on 28 October 1971 for that important debate on Europe and for the vote. At that time about 500,000 people were out of work in Britain and some of us regarded that figure as fairly high. We had gone through a period since the end of the war when unemployment rarely went above 500,000. I have listened to the wonderful story about the Common Market. There are 2·5 million people out of work in Britain and millions are out of work in this nirvana of the Common Market that the right hon. Gentleman describes. Only 5 million people are employed in manufacturing in Britain. There will soon be more working in shops and hotels. Some of that has happened because for the past 12 years we have had a Tory Government whom the right hon. Gentleman has occasionally supported. When I look at the Common Market now I do not see an economic miracle any more. I see trouble with a capital T and mass unemployment.

Mr. Heath: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would expect me to go into the history of the past 12 years on this occasion; nor can he blame the European Community for the situation. My Government managed to bring unemployment down to just 560,000 despite the policy that had been overdone by Roy Jenkins, now Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, whose financial policy pushed unemployment up well above 1 million.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman is saying that he does not care about the dole queues.

Mr. Heath: I am saying nothing of the sort. The hon. Gentleman knows that throughout my political life I have worked to bring down unemployment. On this occasion, the hon. Gentleman has gone too far.

Defence is now being discussed, and it must also be treated realistically. NATO and those who are responsible for running it now feel that they have empty hands and are understandably looking for a purpose. I say to the Prime

[Mr. Heath]

Minister and to the Foreign Secretary that NATO is not justified in turning itself into a purely political instrument or in saying that it will extend its breadth to other parts of the world. I am strongly opposed to that, as, I think, are the majority of hon. Members, and it must not be allowed to come about.

Let us examine the European contribution to NATO. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary knows very well what President Kennedy said to me. He may have said it to others. He said that he wanted two tall, strong towers in NATO—an American tower and a European tower. I said, "You have a tall, strong tower and we have a rather wobbly one"—to use the current expression. He said, "That is why I want Britain in the Community and will do everything I can to help you get into it. I shall be as discreet as possible and you know the way to let me know what you want."

That is not anti-NATO. That is the proper basis for NATO. If the United States, a super-power, is one of the pillars, Europe is perfectly entitled to organise its defence to be the second pillar inside NATO. The Americans do not grumble about that. How could they? How do we form the European tower? There is no doubt that over time the Americans will remove more and more of their forces from Europe if the present situation continues. Therefore, we must be prepared to do more to look after our own defence.

The Western European Union is said to be the answer, but it was formed for one purpose—to bring Germany into the family of European nations, and it was successful. After that, it fell into disuse. I resurrected it on 18 April 1962, so that we could have a discussion that the French would not allow in the Community negotiations, then it fell into disuse again. Now, we are trying to make an institution that had another purpose into one that will deal with defence in Europe. That may be the best way to deal with it at the moment, but I do not believe that, after a time, the Community will continue to exist with these outside organisations dotted about it. This will be particularly so as the European Parliament gains more powers and strength.

What is more, one cannot separate defence from the economy, as we can see at the moment. We cannot separate defence from foreign policy, or foreign policy from the economy. Therefore, the time will come when these things will have to form a unity in exactly the same way as the three communities that used to exist are now one Community. These organisations will develop. It is because I believe that this is bound to happen that I am more optimistic than events give me justification for being.

I shall deal now with the suggestion that there should be a referendum.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I can now ask the right hon. Gentleman a question that I have wanted to ask him for 20 years. He has described his commitment to broad political union. Did he have a mandate for the vote mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Did the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) have a mandate for the Single European Act? Does the Prime Minister have a mandate for going to Maastricht next week and agreeing to what is in that treaty?

Mr. Heath: I can answer only for myself; I cannot answer for my right hon. Friends. We had a debate in the House over many days in July and over many days when we returned in October, and at the end we had a vote, in which Conservative Members were free to vote as they wished. It was up to the Labour party to decide how it would allow its Members of Parliament to vote. It decided to put on the Whip, but 72 of its Members abandoned it, with the result that there was a majority of 112 in favour.

Every time that the matter was debated, from my opening speech at the first conference in Paris in October 1961, it was made clear that the purpose was to have an ever-closer union to create a European Community. Every single document—I have quoted some already—has made that clear. I believe that we had complete authority from the House to carry on as we did.

Mr. Spearing: Was that an electoral mandate?

Mr. Heath: From the House.

Mr. Spearing: From the country?

Mr. Heath: Yes, because the country elects the House. That is why I want to deal with the referendum. There are those who say that there must be no infringement of sovereignty, but immediately say that we must have a referendum.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made a dramatic speech in the debate on the referendum in 1975. Most people know that, when the House debated our entry into the Community, the then Mr. Wilson said that he would not tolerate a referendum, and we both agreed about that. At the end of the debate, there was no decision to have a referendum. However, there was a referendum because one of his Cabinet colleagues put pressure on him and he gave way. Even then, it was rightly said to be an exceptional case and not to be followed by any others.

We are now told that it has become part of the constitution, but I am a simple fellow and I was brought up to believe that we do not have a constitution, so I do not see how a referendum can be part of it.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): If my memory of those days is clear, the noble Lord Jenkins was Home Secretary in the then Labour Government and utterly refused to present to the House the Bill to allow a referendum. Is it not true that the noble Lord Jenkins, who is still a leading member of the Liberal Democrats, has done a U-turn, with the rest of his party, on this issue?

Mr. Heath: I think so.

I have here a quote from my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, who said in the debate on the referendum:

"It would bind and fetter parliamentary sovereignty in practice."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1975; Vol 888, c. 315.]

I agree with her entirely. It would, and I see no reason to change my view, or her view, at this moment or in the future. I do not believe in referendums as a means of government.

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher (Finchley): I know that I inherited that position from my right hon. Friend, and I loyally upheld it. Now, it looks to me as if three parties will be for a single currency and for sacrificing a great deal of the work that it has previously been the right of Parliament to do. How are the people to make their views known in

this absence of choice? That was the particular point. My right hon. Friend will remember that our right hon. Friend the noble Lord Hailsham, made an interesting speech on elective dictatorship.

Hon. Members: Oh!

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Thatcher: Therefore, as he has been in the House longer than I have, will my right hon. Friend tell us how people can make their views known when all parties take the same view but each is divided?

Mr. Heath: This is an occasion which constantly occurs in parliamentary history.

Mr. Budgen: Rubbish.

Mr. Heath: What a pity some people have such a limited vocabulary. People can make their views known in a variety of ways, as we know, and can judge candidates on other questions. If all three parties are united on the issue of a single currency——

Mr. Cryer: They are not united.

Mr. Heath: I said if they are united. I am talking about the party as a whole, not about those below the Gangway. If the parties are united, it is open for people to judge, on the merits of the candidates, whom they want to return. The Foreign Secretary quoted Lord Attlee saying that referenda are "for demagogues and dictators". As in so many other things, although he has never had the credit for it, Lord Attlee was right. I strongly support the Prime Minister in his mission and I wish him every success.

6.8 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quietly as a courtesy to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) who has the Floor?

Mr. Molyneaux: I am glad to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), even if he, too, is below the Gangway. I share his view of the importance of co-operation with the rest of Europe. He and I are therefore in line with the Prime Minister, who yesterday said:

"our responsibility . . . must also be to all the other European countries which are now returning to democracy for the first time in 50 years."

He concluded with the words:

"Our door must be open to them."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 281.]

I have faith in the Prime Minister's ability to ensure that at Maastricht the rules will not be drawn so tightly as to treat those eastern European nations as second-class Europeans.

The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) yesterday referred to the history of what she correctly termed "the conveyor belt". I want briefly to augment her history lesson. There are some present in the Chamber who can remember Britain's first tentative attempt to gain entry. We had an assurance at that time from the Macmillan Government that the Government were merely engaged in a reconnaissance operation to probe, to see what terms might be on offer, but not to make any kind of commitment. There was no question of making any decision; the House of Commons would consider carefully any terms which might be on offer, but there would be no commitment to entry then.

When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup returned after having done, if I may say so, a good job from his point of view and from the point of view at that time of the majority of his party, we were then asked by the Macmillan Government whether it would be sensible to reject terms which were far better than anything that we had a right to expect.

I am the only surviving Ulster Unionist on this Bench who voted against Second Reading of the European Communities Bill on 17 February 1972. At that time, I was in receipt of the Conservative party Whip. I defied a three-line Whip on that occasion in the Division which gave the Government a majority of eight to take Britain into what was then termed the European Economic Community.

I was not disciplined on that occasion. I was not expelled. That came two years later when I opposed the same Government on the Sunningdale Anglo-Irish agreement. But it would be fair to say in defence of the majority of the 309 who voted for that Second Reading that they never intended that the structure should extend beyond its then title—the European Economic Community. In fairness to most of the 309, it has to be said that, once they became aware of the more sinister designs, they had the courage and integrity to say no, and they still have that courage and integrity. I defend the right of English men and women to say no, even though they occasionally deny the right to Ulster men to say no to the dictation of a foreign Government.

In recent months there has been a parallel awakening throughout the entire United Kingdom electorate. In 1975, in the Wilson referendum, the electorate were prepared to support what was presented at that time as a wider trading bloc, and well we can remember that point being put to us. We were asked whether it would not be a good idea to enter this all-powerful bloc to enable our products to be sold to 250 million customers. That would, for example, benefit the British motor industry which would be able to sell its products to the 250 million customers in Europe, who presumably were thought to be incapable of making their own cars. I do not need to rub in the lesson of what has happened in the interval to the British motor industry.

Whatever the speed of the conveyor belt, we have to accept that the long-term policy was and is one of gradualism. It is a policy which depends on a certain vagueness at all stages during the past 30 years and more and perhaps into the years ahead, but there is a responsibility upon those of us who have no particular vested interest in the outcome of the next general election to probe the intentions of both parties and to bring out the real effects in a way which is difficult for both the Government and the Opposition, for understandable reasons.

Even in the past few months, the electorate have moved from approval in general to opposition in particular. The main cause of that is the way in which the Commission has prematurely shown its hand. The general public may not be greatly motivated by all the technical issues that we have been debating during the past two days which are of

[Mr. Molyneaux]

legitimate concern to Parliament, but they are incensed by the nooks and crannies meddling, much of it unnecessary and all of it plain daft.

The draftsmen of the European directive are unlikely to call a halt or to suspend production in what is for Britain a pre-election period. By the time we come to that general election, answers will be required of every candidate, not so much on the big issues, as on a range of needling, meddlesome demands. Answers of a kind may be given, but they are unlikely to allay suspicion. Election addresses and manifestos may or may not be unambiguous, but the return of what may be a candidate of conviction does not guarantee that he or she will be able to sustain his or her position in the context of a general election.

The supremacy of the ballot box is subject of the greater supremacy of the party Whips office. Only on rare occasions can a three-line Whip be safely defied. Rebellions have to be rationed. That point is relevant to the exchanges between the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the right hon. Member for Finchley and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

One example of the breakdown of the supremacy of the ballot box, even of common sense, in the face of the overlordship of the Whips office, is fresh in my memory. It came on the morning of the vote expressing approval of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when countless right hon. and hon. Members, many of them present in the Chamber this evening, came up to me with words of encouragement which I summarise as follows—"Jim, sorry I couldn't be with you in your Lobby last night, but don't worry, the damn thing won't work anyway."

That attitude did not disillusion me as it might disillusion others. I have been here long enough to be proof against disillusionment. I fully understand why right hon. and hon. Members had to say that. But that is why I have to agree with the right hon. Member for Finchley when she said yesterday:

"let the people speak."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 298.]

As a constitutionalist, I have had to conclude, somewhat regrettably, that a referendum is desirable. To those who claim that framing a question would be impossible, I say let them try this for a draft: Do you want to govern yourselves or do you want to be governed by others?

6.18 pm

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) has been in the House for a long time, and during that time he has earned its affection and respect. I am pleased to be following him in today's debate, although I must add that I cannot agree with his final remarks.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister opened the debate with a particularly well-judged and well-considered speech, and I entirely support what he said. As has been mentioned at least once today, on an earlier occasion my right hon. Friend said that Britain's place was right at the heart of Europe. I endorse that view entirely; but the question that most of us have been addressing in this debate is, what sort of Europe do we wish to be at the heart of?

That is the key issue—the issue of what is to be the constitution of Europe. Such an important issue should be debated openly. It is useless for some right hon. Members to say, "That was decided long ago; you signed up to this, that and the other." That is not so; this is a live issue, a difficult issue and an issue which the House must address seriously—as, in my view, it has done in this debate.

Historians of the future may look back on the debate—or, at least, on one aspect of it—almost with a sense of disbelief. The big event of recent years has been the complete change in the European scene—and, indeed, the world scene—following the collapse of communism and the end of the cold war. As some of my hon. Friends have pointed out, that has had a profound effect on the condition of Europe.

Countries—many of them members of the European Free Trade Association—that had previously felt that their commitment to neutrality prevented them from joining the Community are no longer inhibited, for the ending of the cold war means that the question no longer arises. Now they feel free to join, and wish to do so.

As for the countries of central and eastern Europe—the fledgling democracies—they, too, want to join; but, as we all know, that part of our continent is in crisis. This half, fortunately, is doing reasonably well, but the same cannot be said of the other half. It is experiencing an economic crisis: parts of eastern Europe are on the brink of total economic disintegration. There are also political crises—crises of legitimacy, and the crises involved in accommodating the nationalisms that are emerging in various regions. Those nationalisms could be put to very constructive use, but they could also prove destructive. That is where the problems are; that is the part of Europe to which we should be paying attention today.

Those historians of the future will, I think, be amazed that we are expending so much time, energy and effort on addressing not the half of Europe that is in difficulties, but the half that is not. We are fiddling with western Europe while eastern Europe burns.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I entirely agree with what my right hon. Friend has just said. Is it not encouraging, however, that—as far as I know—not a single eastern European leader has said, publicly or privately, that the Community should slow the developments that it is currently achieving, pending the eventual adhesion of eastern European countries? Despite the difficulties that those countries are experiencing, their leaders all say that they are fully prepared to join at the stage of development that currently prevails.

Mr. Lawson: I now have a fair amount to do with the leaders of those countries, and, unfortunately, they are in a very weak position. But I have heard none of them say that they welcome the treaties or consider them helpful. The Community should be devoting much more attention to what it can do to open its markets to the produce of those countries, especially their farm produce. Their manufacturing sectors are in a very poor state, although there is a world market, and a European market in particular, for the agricultural produce that they are able to generate. The record of France—a prime mover in the current developments in western Europe—is nothing short of scandalous.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Trade with eastern Europe has normally been centred on the Soviet Union, which still needs that produce, because it is short of food. Surely it would be more logical—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has excellent parliamentary manners and knows that she should address the Chair.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Surely it would be more logical to continue the supply of food to the Soviet Union. I have been there recently, and I know that the people there are extremely hungry. If we provided aid, they could consume the food at home rather than putting our farmers out of work.

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that my hon. Friend takes such a narrow view. The problem with the Soviet Union, or rather the former Soviet Union, relates much more to the distribution of food there than the capacity to produce it. Eastern European countries produce an export surplus, and they desperately need western markets. They want to improve their trading connections with the west, and I think that we should encourage that.

Let me return to the subject of the Maastricht treaties. The Government face a difficult task, which they are handling with considerable skill, but concern is still felt by many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House—including me—about the present position. For 40 years, I have believed that Britain's destiny lies in Europe; ever since the formation of the European Community, I have believed that we should join, and I am only sorry that we did not do so at the beginning.

One of the reasons why I supported the Community was that it struck me as an inspired creation: it provided a means for the most intimate form of co-operation between the various nation states of Europe, without becoming a federation—a single united states of Europe. It got the balance right between the need for the closest possible co-operation and the retention of nation states. I believe that the latter is not only important historically, but profoundly important to the successful conduct of policy. National loyalty is essential.

We are now being asked to suggest that the careful balance which is the European Community be destroyed —transformed into a federal Europe. There was a time when people said, "There is no such thing; it is just a bogey in the night. Do not worry about a federal Europe, for that is not what it is about." Now, however, the cat is firmly out of the bag, in the preamble to the treaty—the "federal vocation". We know from the prime movers in the exercise that that is their objective; I disagree with it, but there is nothing disreputable about it, and equally no point in concealing it.

Some Liberal Members have said, "What is all this about federalism? Federalism merely means decentralisation." Is it really being suggested that what Mr. Delors wants is less power at the centre and more power for the nation states? Is it really being suggested that what Mr. Mitterrand wants is less power for the Community, and more for Germany and other nation states? On the contrary: the desire exists to create a federal united states of Europe. As I have said, that is an entirely legitimate point of view, although I do not happen to share it.

Why am I opposed to it? First, I believe that that is not what the people of Britain want and I suspect strongly that it is not wanted by those living in most of the other countries that comprise the Community. Secondly, history, including recent history, suggests that multi-national federations simply do not work. To try to embark upon them is a road to immense political difficulties and troubles and could lead to a nationalist backlash of the ugliest type. As I have said, nationalism can be channelled to positive purposes, but we all know that it can take an ugly form. That is the danger if we go along that route.

Even those who favour a federal Europe—a united states of Europe—should be concerned at what is in the treaties and the way that things are going. The embryo federation is a much more centralist model than anybody, even those in favour of a federation, could be happy with. It gives powers to the centre which the united states does not require and provides protections for states' rights which are wholly inadequate.

The doctrine of subsidiarity is an attempt to meet the problem, but it is wholly inadequate and feeble. Who is to decide and how are they to decide what it is appropriate for the former nations to have within their responsibility? Who is to decide what should be determined centrally? The idea is that issues should be decided at the appropriate level and, presumably, the Commission will make the proposal as to which that level is. That is nothing like the protection contained in the constitution of the United States, where there are clearly defined and written responsibilities for the federal Government and everything that is not clearly written down is the responsibility of the various states. There is no such protection here.

Moreover, with the constitution-mongering of the Community, we have a constitution that is permanently on the move. That troubles me. I believe in a dynamic society, but that society needs a stable framework. A few years ago, we had the change in the constitution brought about by the Single European Act. Now, further constitutional change is proposed with the Maastricht treaties and we are told that there will be a further constitutional change in 1996, and so on. It is not only undesirable to have a constitution permanently on the move, but with each change there is pressure for more and more power to be given to the centre.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that for the future we should think seriously about the six-month presidency? Is it not the nature of things that in each country's turn there is inevitably a trend to be different and to drive on in some other direction?

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend. The issues are rather more fundamental than that, but I agree that the six-month presidency is not helpful and that an annual presidency would be preferable.

I shall give two examples. First, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pointed out, there are the social issues. Nobody is suggesting that social issues such as employment conditions and so on are not a fit subject for legislation. That is not the point. The point is at what level the legislation should be. Should it be national legislation, or should it be Communitywide legislation? It is striking that in the United States, which is a single nation state of a federal nature, it is largely the individual states that decide their own arrangements. They are not centrally imposed.

If we take the latter route, there will inevitably be pressure to push up the level to that of the highest—the Federal Republic of Germany—and there will be huge costs on the whole European economy, particularly the poorer countries of the Community, which could not

[Mr. Lawson]

possibly bear such costs. The countries that benefit will not be in Europe but will be Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Secondly, majority voting on the environment also concerns me. It is accepted far too readily because there are aspects of the environment that do indeed cross frontiers. I agree that it is appropriate for those aspects to be decided at Community level. However, there is also a range of environmental issues that are perhaps the most local issues of any that we ever deal with as Members of Parliament. The idea that they too should come under an environmental umbrella to be decided at Community level is absurd and offensive. River pollution has been quoted. Of course the Rhine runs through many countries, but there are not many rivers in this country that cross national borders.

Clearly, the key issues are those of foreign policy, security—both external and internal—and currency and all that flows from that. I was interested to hear—it was one of the few clear things that was said by the Opposition spokesman, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—that the Opposition were in favour of majority voting on foreign policy. I had not heard that before. Without wishing to give offence to a great Department of State, I see a danger of a sort of Foreign Office view gaining ground which holds that foreign policy, defence and security are what really matter and that we should not worry about money. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer recognises that view.

Such a suggestion could not be more wrong. As the EMU treaty makes clear, perfectly logically, a single currency requires a single European central bank and, in a democracy, that in turn must lead to a single Finance Minister and a single Government. Once that is established, independent foreign policy and independent defence policy go out of the window.

In a sense, the game was given away by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when he said that a single market requires a single currency. That is erroneous. Tell that to the Americans, Canadians and Mexicans—they have joined up in a free trade area. When he was trying to demonstrate the correctness of what he was saying, he said that we should look at the United States of America. Of course, the United States is precisely what I am describing. It is a single country with a single Treasury Secretary and a single Government.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): There is only one dollar in the United States.

Mr. Lawson: That is my point. They all go together —the single currency, the single central bank, the single finance ministry and the single Government. We must be clear that that is the choice facing us.

The idea that we can have an independent European central bank alone, which would be far and away the most powerful institution in the Community with no accountability to anybody, is absolutely bizarre and democratically unacceptable. One of the extraordinary oddities—I put it no stronger than that—of the Opposition's position is that, with the enthusiasm of the convert, they have embraced the single currency and an independent European central bank, but they will not tolerate an independent Bank of England. That is a very strange position for any party, even the Labour party, to adopt.

Mrs. Currie: As my right hon. Friend probably realises, many engineering businesses in Derbyshire which trade in Europe already trade in deutschmarks. How much control and influence does the House have over that?

Mr. Lawson: I have never been engaged in increasing governmental control. I am happy that the Government of whom I was proud to be a member and who were led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) abolished exchange controls. Business men in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and elsewhere are now free to trade in any currency they choose. However, the advantages of having just a single currency are less than my hon. Friend may think.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): In an article in the *Evening Standard* last week, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) concluded by saying that the Prime Minister should sign the economic and monetary union treaty at Maastricht because it was open to the other 11 members to go ahead with the treaty on their own. I put to the right hon. Member for Blaby, who has an intellectual reputation, a question that was put to the Prime Minister yesterday. If the other 11 were to go ahead on their own, what would be the position of sterling in relation to the single European ecu? Would it be able to float free or would it be forced to shadow the ecu? The right hon. Member for Blaby knows something about that.

Mr. Lawson: I do not believe that the other 11 will go on their own, even though they are free to do so.

There are budgetary consequences, too, of a single currency and they are spelled out in the Dutch draft treaty. It has been said that we do not need those to be spelled out explicitly and that we can rely on market disciplines. In theory that may be the case, but in practice it is doubtful. Market disciplines depend on a no-bailing-out rule under which the Community as a whole would not bail out a country in difficulties, just as a US federal Government would not bail out a state and we would not bail out a local authority. That may lack market credibility even if it is true.

Other important problems such as debt overhang have not yet even been addressed. The various countries that comprise the Community have built up a considerable national debt which they were able to sell and have freely held, because those countries were responsible for their own currencies. Once they cease to be responsible for their own low currencies, the readiness to hold the existing debt, never mind any further debt, would be in doubt in a number of countries, although perhaps not in all.

Several countries would face a critical situation in which they would not be able to borrow any more in the world's markets. Their burden of debt interest would rise considerably and they would have to raise taxes to meet that. There might even be a run on the Government. The market would see it coming and that would begin to affect the financial markets and the markets in that debt well before a single currency came about, if the market thinks that a single currency is on the way.

It is interesting to consider the other half of Europe. The more perceptive analysts of the political economy of the former Soviet Union are increasingly concluding that the only possible way out is to do away with the single currency, the rouble, and, on economic and political grounds, for the various republics to have their own currencies. Experts as far apart as Mr. George Soros and Professor John Williamson have reached that conclusion.

Let us consider the draft treaties. The political union treaty in its present form, for the reasons that I have given and for those given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, is clearly unacceptable. However, I believe that the EMU treaty is something that the Government can sign, now that the stand-aside clause is written into it, and there is the declaration, which is separate from the treaty, of support in principle for the single currency, which we shall not be signing, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear. That is very important. I am glad that the declaration is there, because our ability to refrain from signing it demonstrates our position on that issue.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): At the beginning of the draft treaty on EMU, there is a treaty obligation under clauses 2 and 3(a) which would commit us to a single currency and fixed exchange rates. Will my right hon. Friend clarify that?

Mr. Lawson: I do not believe that my hon. Friend is right. The treaty clearly states that everything is governed "as provided for in this treaty",
and the treaty contains the opt-out clause.

The convergence conditions in fact make it unlikely that eight or even seven countries will be willing and able to qualify in the event. Those conditions are not an optional extra: they are inherent in the very nature of the enterprise. Germany is conscious of the immense problems that arose in relation to currency union with eastern Germany. Germany is aware that such convergence conditions, or something very much like them, are absolutely essential.

I could support stage 2, with the independent national central banks co-operating together, as the Germans would like to see, under the Committee of Central Bank Governors, renamed the European Monetary Institute. That would be perfectly acceptable, but as a stopping point. That is a perfectly adequate constitution for the monetary side of Europe.

But the real purpose behind all this is not economic; it is political. I believe that there is no net economic gain and that the politics is the politics of Europe past, not the politics of Europe future.

6.48 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): In the interests of time, and not wanting to abuse Privy Councillors' time, perhaps I should not refer to the speech made by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) except in one respect. I found his comments about federalism extremely interesting.

A headline in *The Times* today states:

"Delors gives MEPs mocking account of Britain's stance."

I simply say to Mr. Delors that I was in Vichy France in 1944 when the French fought each other. I do not mock it: it happened. That was a problem that France faced. If we have old historical problems and old historical ideas based on an unwritten constitution and the fact that we are averse to federalism, I hope that he will not mock. What happened in Vichy France was endemic to France, and our feeling against federalism is something that we have grown up with over the years.

This may be my last speech in a major debate. However, last week I saw a reissue of "The Four Feathers", a colour film which was issued in 1939 and which I paid one and sixpence to see. The film has been reissued, and it is very good. Reissued though the film was, people did not appreciate it in the way in which we younger people would have done in 1939.

I was selected as a parliamentary candidate in 1952, and when I stood in 1955, we were at the beginning of the EEC debate. When I became more active and entered the House after the death of Hugh Gaitskell, it was the greatest problem of the Labour party. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will remember that he was then a research officer at Transport house. The EEC was also the subject of discussion among the Conservative party.

The conflict of views about going into Europe which was led by men whom I respected, such as Ernest Bevin, Attlee and Churchill, was not because they were evil men but because they came from a generation when going into Europe and eschewing the open sea was something that they could not comprehend. Now, with a wider membership and, as the right hon. Member for Blaby said, with what is happening in eastern Europe, with a broadening role in the face of new problems, and with the changes of the war years over, I have come to believe not that we should just be members but that we should play a more positive role not only to influence the future, which is important, but to change the existing system.

I wish to refer to some of the existing institutions of the EC. Beyond Maastricht, we must consider those institutions closely. I look askance at the presidency system. Small countries are initiating discussion and moving forward on matters such as defence and foreign affairs about which they know very little. The Dutch Foreign Minister could draw up a constitution on every subject under the sun every morning before breakfast. Perhaps he could do one for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Molyneaux: William of Orange.

Mr. Rees: The fact that it would not work would make no difference.

We should initiate change in the bureaucratic Commission. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), a former Prime Minister, was not concerned about the bureaucratic Commission.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I take the point that the right hon. Gentleman makes about the presidency. The over-representation of small countries provides a built-in vote in favour of federalism. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that applies equally to the weight that they are given in the Council of Ministers and in the Parliament, and that equal representation and equal say, proportionate to size, are important?

Mr. Rees: That subject should surely be examined. The point that I was raising was the six-month presidency, when countries seem to be more determined to show their political virility than to find a way forward. I certainly have no objection to the smaller countries. I was talking about the six-month presidency, which raises problems.

[Mr. Rees]

Of course the European Parliament needs more powers, but we should watch it very carefully. Over the years I have noticed some excellent Euro-Members, many of whom have ended up in this place. The aim of many Labour Members of the European Parliament is to come here. The fact that only 30 per cent. of people vote in a European election demonstrates a lack of interest in Euro elections. All parties need to do something about that.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made clear his objection on foreign affairs, to the methods suggested in the treaty. Let us look at the practicalities and at the way in which the EC has behaved over Yugoslavia. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, (Mr. Amery), to whom I always defer because he played a major part in a southern Slav country, 40 or 50 years ago——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): And Albania.

Mr. Rees: He was there too, but he behaved extraordinarily bravely during the Yugoslavian campaign. Most hon. Members would not appreciate that.

The Germans, with their long-term policy in favour of Croatia and Slovenia, had to have seven divisions in Yugoslavia to hold them down. I played a small part in the air war. Anybody who believes that Yugoslavia could be dealt with as Saddam Hussein's Iraq was dealt with had better look at the terrain. The Serbs, with whom the right hon. Gentleman was fighting, who were fighting in the mountains, held up seven German divisions. The Italians were involved in a divided-up Croatia. The EC was romancing when it talked about dealing with the Yugoslav problem. There is no way of dealing with that country unless one redraws the boundaries, and that would be a difficult task. It is not enough just to have a common foreign policy. A common foreign policy means nothing if it cannot be implemented.

On defence, if America is not involved, Germany or France will become the main nuclear power in Europe. It is important to remember that. There could not be a European defence force that was not a nuclear power. I would prefer America rather than France, Germany or ourselves to be the nuclear power. That raises other issues.

The political side also relates to defence. The first time that I heard of Maastricht was on 12 May 1940, when the RAF was shot out of the sky and knocked on the ground. Fairey Battle squadrons went in to attack bridges over the canal at Maastricht. They were massacred. Politicians of all parties should realise how foolish they can be. Two young men won the Victoria cross at that time. They deserved the VC. The then politicians led them into battle without the right equipment and without a proper defence agreement.

Of course, there was a defence agreement with the French, but what it added up to was mere chat. If there is to be a defence agreement, it must be in terms of integration of weaponry, what the targets are, and the supply of equipment. The day after the Maastricht massacre, the French general commanding the armée de l'air said, that he was sorry, but they were the wrong targets; that was not where the Germans were. By the time they were located, the Germans were into France.

It is not enough to have a political policy, and it is not enough to have a defence policy just to give it a name. It will not happen that way. Therefore, we must watch matters very carefully.

The decisions will be taken in the next Parliament, when I will not be here. Nor will 60, 70 or even more hon. Members when they lose their seats, plus another 100 or so who will retire. It is not the place of this House to take final decisions. It is up to the new Parliament to take final decisions. We are simply conducting a holding operation. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) advises me, as he always does, that a Bill amending the treaty will be before the House. It is important that we do not hand to our successors decisions made at the end of a dying Parliament; we should leave them to take the decisions in future. We should take it easy and not be led by the nose by the Commission or by the Council of Foreign Ministers. Let us not always be looking for great change. Let us see how it goes. Important changes will also take place in economic affairs, but it is the next Parliament that will matter.

I have tried to end my speech before 7 o'clock, because many other right hon. and hon. Members want to contribute. I will finish by looking back—which, at my age, I do far too often. I have taken my children to the battlefields of north-east France as a result of which their grandfather died because of the foolishness of politicians. We must judge the second world war differently, but let us make sure that we do not repeat the mistakes that so many politicians thoughout Europe made over the past 100 years. They made elementary mistakes for which young men died.

We must think hard. Just after the war, I taught in a grammar school, and one day the French assistante said to me, "This school will clap itself to death." I begin to believe that the House will clap itself to death one day. We think that we are so good and do everything absolutely correctly, but of course we do not. We sneer at the European Parliament, but it is time that we looked at Europe in other than a partisan way—"Ha ha, ha. Did you hear what happened? Did you hear what he said? Wasn't that funny?" We should look to the future, and if we make mistakes young men and women will die. I do not want my grandchildren to do what their grandfather did, or even marginally what I had to do.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in effect.

7 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I agreed with much of what the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said at the beginning of his speech, but I did not go along with his closing remarks.

I want to make one comment about the referendum before dealing with the main subject of my speech. I won a marginal seat and have held it on five successive occasions. I believe that real democracy is allowing voters to decide in a general election and not in a referendum, which is a totally different thing, and one that is alien to my concept of democracy.

My party is a broad church, with room for many shades of opinion. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends—be they pro or anti-European fanatics—to remember that voters will not support a party that is riven by doubts or dissent. The voters will write off the Opposition, whose policies are now purely hypocritical and do not matter. I appeal to my right hon. and hon. Friends to realise that elections are lost by a party that is divided.

I turn to defence and security issues, and speak as the leader of the United Kingdom delegation to the Western European Union and to the Council of Europe. I much regretted the dismissive attitude taken by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who has clearly totally forgotten that the Western European Union was revitalised, added Spain and Portugal to its ranks, and produced the Hague platform —which provided for the WEU's nine members to defend their borders, with nuclear weapons if need be. It undertook out-of-area activities in respect of minesweeping in the Iran-Iraq war, and of the sanction stopping of ships during the Gulf war. My right hon. Friend cannot write off the WEU as simply and as simplistically as he did.

Recently, both the Franco-German and Italian-British defence proposals were presented, followed by the valuable NATO conclusions. Again, I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup in his comments on NATO, which were so childish as to be not worth considering.

I will inform the House of the conclusions of the parliamentary assembly of the Western European Union, which comprises elected members from the Parliaments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, and the United Kingdom. In December 1990, the parliamentary assembly

"adopted a position opposed to certain proposals for WEU to be integrated in the European Community, Its view was that, if implemented, these proposals would weaken the Atlantic Alliance and also Europe's ability to play a useful role on the world stage. The Assembly therefore recommended that the Council pursue the reactivation of WEU in order to allow Europe to play a more effective part in NATO."

That decision was carried overwhelmingly, with the support of all four of the political parties represented in the WEU.

Subsequently, the presidential committee, which runs the WEU between assemblies, decided to offer advice to both the Council of Ministers and the intergovernmental conference. I was given the task of preparing a document, which was adopted without opposition in March 1991 by all nine nations and all four political parties. I will quote from it, because it is important to do so in the context of the reasons that have been given for not giving the WEU control of defence.

"WEU could establish a link between a Europe in the process of unification and an Atlantic Alliance in the process of transformation and thus provide the vehicle for a stronger Europe to contribute more to joint security . . .

WEU must be at one and the same time the means of allowing Europe to make its voice heard in a Euro-American dialogue"—

it must never be forgotten that Europe must always have an input into that dialogue—

"of which the Atlantic Alliance is the institutional framework and the instrument for making the most of the European contribution to the defence of the West . . .

This contribution of Europe is the more essential in that the American military presence on the continent of Europe, reduced since the war in the Gulf, will remain below what it was in the past . . . Defence policy should continue to be made in the organisations which assure collective defence, NATO, and WEU. It should be a task of the European Council to reach conclusions on common foreign and security policy. These would serve as a guideline for co-operation within WEU on defence matters"—

not control, but guidelines.

A linked theme, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and others referred is the position of the members of the former Warsaw pact, who desperately want to be accepted and acknowledged as democratic. I had the privilege of leading two teams of Council of Europe observers to elections in east Germany and, recently, Poland, and I have spoken to Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Czechs—the last two are now full members of the Council of Europe.

They realise that their route to the Community can be opened only if their countries are practising real democracy in respect of human rights, and multi-party Parliaments—although I said to my Polish friends, "You can go a bit too far." More importantly, in the light of the events in Yugoslavia, whose guest membership of the Council of Europe is likely to be suspended, those countries must provide proper protection for minorities. The question of protecting minorities is one that will pose a real danger to Europe in the next five years.

It is simplistic to say that one should recognise Slovenia or Croatia. If one did so now, that would unleash some of the most horrible massacres in the other states of what was Yugoslavia. However, I acknowledge the tragedy of not recognising those two states. I do not propose at this stage to try to provide an answer. I only say that it is the route of the Council of Europe that has been recognised by the Community as leading to Community membership itself. That cannot be bypassed, because one cannot have in Community membership countries that do not follow the concepts of democracy and human rights.

I address a final word to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. When they go to Maastricht, they will face difficult choices and tasks. They should remind their opposite numbers that their own parliamentarians—the French, Germans, and Italians—all subscribed to the view that the defence issue to which I referred should not be brought within the European Community. The Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries of France, Germany, Italy, the Benelux or wherever should be reminded that they will have to account to their own Parliament.

I advise the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South that the advantage of organisations such as the Council of Europe and the Western European Union is that they are composed of Members of their own national Parliaments who have roots inside democracies, and that those parliamentarians have spoken and have said no to the inclusion of defence in the competence of the European Community.

I hope that that will be of some help to my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is something on which they can rely and something that their colleagues in other countries will find difficult to deny.

7.9 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The European Community is one of the great success stories of the post-war world. As the Soviet Union collapses, the European Community, which is a union of free peoples, gathers strength. It is already a community of 12 members, and it could be a community of 20 by the beginning off the

[Mr. Giles Radice]

next century. It is the world's greatest trading bloc and, with economic and monetary union, it could have the world's strongest currency. As the Foreign Secretary pointed out this afternoon, it increasingly takes a co-ordinated view of foreign policy issues. It is inconceivable that, by the end of the century, it will not also have a common defence identity.

Whatever we do, the nation states of Europe wil increasingly combine. They will do so of their own volition, which makes the analogy with the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia patently false. The form that that closer union takes will be sui generis. It will be partly federal and partly confederal, but whatever form it takes, go ahead it will, whether we like it or not.

The question for the nation and this House is whether we participate in the process of union or stand aside. I agree with the Prime Minister that we must be at the heart of Europe, working with our partners to build Europe's future. For too long, the British have been reluctant Europeans—for understandable reasons, because our strong sense of national identity has been shaped by our exceptional history. Unlike the other 11 members of the EC, Britain has not experienced serious military defeat, occupation, civil war or revolution for at least 200 years.

At the end of the war, as one of the victors, we still believed in the absolute viability of the independent nation state. Our parliamentary tradition and constitutional development and our system of law have set us apart from the continent. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that, because of our world empire, we looked outwards, across the Atlantic, rather than to the mainland of Europe.

However, since 1945, our past has proved a poor guide. In the post-war world, our power has been reduced. We are now no more and no less than a medium-sized European power. Sadly, a whole generation of political leaders—and even some of their successors today, if what we have heard in the past two days is right—have failed to face up to that fact. When our decline in influence and shift in interest argued strongly for participation in Europe, they remained ambivalent about those whom they thought of as "unreliable continentals". We have heard some of that from the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

As a consequence, Britain squandered crucial opportunities over the Schuman plan in 1950, over the common market in 1955 and 1957, and over British entry into the European monetary system in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the end, after allowing those proposals to go forward without us, we were forced to join after the terms had been fixed. It was a classic failure of political leadership. We must not make the same mistake again. Therefore, it is the Government's duty to explain why Britain has to be involved in the process of economic and political union which will be launched at Maastricht.

Geographically, Britain is a group of islands off the mainland of Europe. Historically and culturally, it has always been linked to the continent. Strategically, what happens there has always been and is bound to be of vital interest to Britain. Economically, we cannot afford to be excluded from a group that includes most of our main trading partners, including our biggest partner of all, the Federal Republic of Germany.

I believe that the Government understand those inescapable facts. They know perfectly well that we cannot afford to be left out. They know that, if Britain is really to remain at the heart of Europe, we must sign—if not at Maastricht, then soon after. The Government should tell the House the truth about that. They should stop pretending that they are in a position—that the country is in a position—to refuse to sign the treaties. They should stop portraying themselves as doughty defenders of a Britain that is besieged by marauding continentals. That was always the portrait that was painted by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and I am afraid that that is occasionally true of the present Prime Minister also. That may go down well with some Euro-sceptics among Conservative Members, but it infuriates our partners and reduces our influence in the Community, as I know only too well.

Equally vitally, the Government are failing to make a positive case for European integration. Listening to the Prime Minister, one gets little idea that a single European currency would end transaction costs for business and tourists; eliminate exchange rate instability; provide a stable environment for growth and be the most powerful currency in the world. One certainly would not understand that the real choice was between de facto membership of a deutschmark zone in which we would have no influence and membership of a single currency system in which we would have a stake.

Above all, the Government have failed to point out that the doctrine of sovereignty, so frequently espoused by the right hon. Member for Finchley, is totally out of date. The British concept of parliamentary sovereignty is basically a hangover from Tudor despotism, with little relevance today. It fails to comprehend the weakness of the House of Commons when the Government have a majority. It fails to guarantee civil rights, as our lamentable record at the European Court of Human Rights shows. It underwrites the British state, which is the most centralised in the whole of the European Community.

Equally important, it does not correspond to the facts of the modern world. For over 40 years, we have shared sovereignty in NATO, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) rightly pointed out. For the past 20 years, developments in the capital and financial markets have drastically reduced our autonomy in economic management. Since we joined the EC in 1973, we have lost sovereignty in the areas of trade and agriculture. Later, with the Single European Act and British membership of the exchange rate mechanism—the right hon. Member for Finchley took us into that—our sovereignty was further eroded.

For a medium-sized power such as Britain, the best way to maximise our influence is to pool sovereignty by combining with others. Most European nations understand that, which is why they want to be active members of the European Community. The fact is that there is no alternative to working with our partners in the EC. That point has been reinforced in this debate by the total failure of the Euro-sceptics to come forward with any positive idea about Britain's role. We have not heard a single word. They have made interesting and occasionally convincing criticisms, but they have totally failed to suggest an alternative future for this country.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the positive case that they have made on behalf of the Labour party, especially for common environmental policies and

for minimum social standards as proposed by the social charter, which has been agreed by 11 other countries. My right hon. and hon. Friends have also rightly emphasised that, if one intends to make Community institutions more accountable, one must increase the powers of the European Parliament. They are right to say that.

Labour's positive agenda opens up the prospect for the first time since we joined the Community in 1973 of Britain participating constructively in the European Community. That is the only way of securing the future of the British people.

7.19 pm

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): I shall not take up the argument of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice); it would be unwise to do so. This is a strange debate because, although the motions on the Order Paper tabled by both the Government and the official Opposition parties are long on words, they are short on relevance to the vital questions raised by the draft treaties which will be discussed at Maastricht.

The real issue was put in possibly the best speech that I have heard in this place by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) last night. The question that he put is the right question: are the British people to be governed by those who are accountable to them, or those who are unaccountable or accountable to others? That question is not on the Order Paper. That is why tonight's vote will be interesting but irrelevant.

In a short speech, I shall not attempt to make again the points made so tellingly by others, not least my right hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), the right hon. Members for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

In his speech, the Prime Minister set out the weak position from which he negotiates on economic and monetary union. He told us that he would not accept a treaty that was not in Britain's interest. I am sure that that is so, but he also reminded us that, if he vetoed the draft treaty, the 11 other member states would go outside the treaty of Rome and sign a currency agreement of their own, leaving us out. Bonne chance, say I, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury. But the Prime Minister has declared that that would be unacceptably damaging to us.

Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), in a speech right out of the defeatist book which is kept at the Foreign Office, seemed to declare that a nation with its own currency could not survive in the days of the ecu. Tell that to the marines, and especially the Japanese marines. If the Prime Minister is convinced that we cannot be excluded from the single currency, he cannot afford not to sign the treaty. If that is so, he is not negotiating but pleading for terms.

The Prime Minister says that signing the treaty is merely taking an option on the right to join. But the option has two costs. First, whether in or out, we would bear the cost of supporting the economies which had been made non-viable by the single currency. That is the price of regional aid or structural spending. Secondly, we should have made a moral commitment to the single currency.

Why pass enabling legislation to do what most Members of the House and most voters do not want to do? Why get engaged if we do not truly intend to marry? I remind the House that couples in the intimate atmosphere of engagement sometimes find that pregnancy arises and the shotgun marriage follows.

Leaving aside the issue of sovereignty—not of the House but of the people to self-government—the devil of the single currency is not merely that the economies of the Community are simply not convergent and would be prevented from converging by a single currency, but that they are not all at the same point in their economic cycles.

The exchange rate mechanism is a voluntary prototype for a single currency. That is why, when the French economy was screaming for lower interest rates, President Mitterrand increased them the other day. The German economy and the Bundesbank—independent, I am told—are screaming for higher interest rates. But interest rates are not raised. It would be madness indeed if the ERM was allowed to force an interest rate rise in Britain.

I suspect that there is a deal, spoken or unspoken, which further undermines the Prime Minister's negotiating position. I think Chancellor Kohl has indicated that he knows the risk to the Government's chances of re-election if interest rates have to be raised in Britain. He may have said that there will be no increase in German rates before Maastricht—indeed, hopefully, so long as the treaty is signed, not before our general election. "That, John," says Helmut, "is what European solidarity is about."

But what chance of help if the Prime Minister vetoes the treaty? After all, thinks Helmut, if interest rates rise, perhaps Labour will come in, which is a soft touch not only on the single currency but on political union. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) follows the joke. It is the only thing that he has followed so far in the debate.

There is only one way for the Prime Minister to strengthen his hand. He should legislate now for a referendum to be held once the negotiations at Maastricht are complete. It should put simple yes or no questions on whether the European monetary treaty—and, if there is one, the political treaty—should be accepted. He should say, "It is not me you must persuade, Helmut, but the British people. In Britain it is they who are sovereign."

In the final minutes available to me, I turn to the proposals for political union. On that matter I stand where my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) stood on 24 May 1971. He said:

> "There are certain administrative arrangements which are handled by the Commission and which are clearly defined in the Treaty of Rome, and they cannot go beyond their powers. But our view is that it is the Council of Ministers, representing member countries, who must take the decisions."

He went on to emphasise the importance of the national veto and said:

> "When I urged that there should be democratic control, I had in mind that Ministers are the representatives of their Governments and they are the ones who take the decisions. They are responsible to their own democracies."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1971; Vol. 818, c. 43-44.]

Amen to that, say I. I have not changed my mind, even if my right hon. Friend has changed his.

A week or so ago I heard—others may have done so, too—Lord Cockfield assert that

> "the British people had no moral right and probably no legal right"

to resist the demands of a federal Europe. We can argue about what "federal" means, but Chancellor Kohl knows

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that he is head of a federal state. All the important issues, such as the economy, foreign affairs, defence, immigration and social affairs, are dealt with in Bonn. The rest is left to the provinces. In a federal Europe, that would be the pattern. With England, Scotland, Wales and Ulster seen as provinces like Saxony or Aquitaine, what role would there be for the Government or Parliament of the United Kingdom?

Not only must federalism be stopped in its tracks. The treaty of Rome should be amended to uphold the union of nation state and exclude a federal destiny. In the words of Winston Churchill, who has been much quoted already in the debate:

"We are with Europe but not of it. We are linked but not comprised. We are interested and associated but not absorbed and should European statesmen address us in the words which were used of old—'Shall we speak for thee to the king or captain of the host?'—we should reply, 'Nay sir, for we dwell among our own people'".

That remains my view today.

I repeat that the question on the Order Paper tonight is irrelevant to the question before the House and the country. We might be asked just as well to vote on any three pages picked at random out of "Alice in Wonderland" as on the motions before the House tonight. How can one vote in such circumstances? My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary recently came out of his negotiations with, among others, our French partners, and, in his diplomatic way, observed that, like Waterloo, it had been hard pounding. I yield to no one in my admiration for the great Iron Duke himself, but my favourite general of the Napoleonic wars was General Kutuzov. I shall follow his example.

7.29 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I have disagreed with the political views of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) on many occasions, but he has just highlighted what might be called self-government and he rightly pointed out—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so quietly?

Mr. Spearing: The right hon. Gentleman said that the self-government of this country is in peril and, while I disagree with his domestic politics, he is right to point that out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has a vision of an international society, but the treaty before us—including the treaty of Rome—is not an international treaty. That is why many Opposition Members have consistently and persistently been against it.

The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) has said that he was attracted to the treaty of Rome because he thought that it would provide the vehicle to achieve the objectives that he, my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North and those of us who want a co-operating, international western Europe seek. However, the right hon. Member for Blaby did not say that tonight, because he now realises that it is not a treaty of that sort. Although the right hon. Member for Chingford agreed with his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) way back in 1972, 1973 and 1974, he has also come to the same conclusion. Some of us, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) came to that conclusion a long time ago.

The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has at last realised that perhaps she, too, made some mistakes when she was a member of the Government led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. I intervened to ask him what mandate he had, but I should have asked what electoral mandate. Of course, he did not have one; nor did the right hon. Member for Finchley have a mandate for the Single European Act; and nor does the Prime Minister have an electoral mandate to agree what may come out of Maastricht—he has not even got a parliamentary mandate yet. That is why, either in this Parliament or, more probably, in the next, the machinery for giving legal effect to any treaty that may come about will be a Bill which will have to be passed by the House.

The right hon. Member for Finchley is not the only person to have erred on the subject—I shall come to the Prime Minister in a moment. I am glad that the right hon. Lady is here, because no one would deny that she at least has courage, but I doubt whether she has the instinct for parliamentary government, which some of us believe in. She went to Madrid where the principle of the Delors report was up for discussion.

It is not a matter of memory, but a matter of record, that there was no debate on the Delors report before that summit. There had been a debate some time before on the general subject of a single currency, but not on the report. Yet, when she was confronted with a political situation not unlike that confronting the present Prime Minister—to take the least worst solution—she agreed to the principle of economic and monetary union. The question was, by what means and when? The principle was agreed by the right hon. Lady before any mandate had been given by the House, let alone the electorate.

If the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is right, that is the way in which European union works. It does not allow genuine negotiations, but provides a choice between the least worst solutions for leaders of all parties and all Governments. It provides a pattern of coercion and not of co-operation.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Finchley drew our attention to the scope and powers of the Community. She said:

"It is not the case, as is sometimes alleged, that the Single European Act introduced qualified majority voting in the Community—it was already in the treaty of Rome. As my right hon. Friend said, the Act extended it in certain limited areas for the express and sole purpose of completing the common or single market".—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 292.]

I wish that were true. However, as the right hon. Lady knows, or ought to know now, qualified majority voting could operate not in "limited" but in huge and undefined areas under articles 8A and 100A of the treaty. That is very relevant, because it gave away some of the powers of the House. Either the right hon. Member for Finchley knew that that was the case when she drove the Single European Act through the House on a three-line Whip or she did not. If she knew, she did not tell us and if she did not know, someone misled her. The result is that the single market now operates over a huge and almost undefined area.

My hon. Friends ask why that is so and the answer is simple. The single market is defined in the treaty as an area "without internal frontiers". It is not merely a question of lorries being able to go through borders, of barriers coming up and barbed wire boundaries on the map being expunged; it is a question of a legal boundary.

There may be extenuating circumstances. Perhaps the enthusiasm of the right hon. Member for Finchley for market economics led her to say, "Yes, let's have the single market," because she wanted to bring the benefits of market forces to the benighted tribes on the other side of the channel and to drive market economics through. In so doing, she predicated a single market authority and a single Government. As the right hon. Member for Blaby said, a single currency means a single economic policy, which means a single Chancellor of the Exchequer and a single Government. We might end up with government of bankers, by bankers and for bankers. The only way round the problem is a supranational state, which is what the treaty will bring in if we are not careful.

I give no one cause to believe that I am not an internationalist. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North greatly attracted me in some ways. However, the constitution of the European Community—in the treaty of Rome and the treaty before us—is incapable of providing us with what we seek. It is for that reason that I can have none of the treaty before us today.

7.38 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I also took part in the vote in the House in 1972. It comes ill from the lips of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to say that he had a mandate to do what he did. I remember the cursing and threats—I saw one hon. Member being hammered over the head with an Order Paper. There was certainly no democracy in the House when it took that vital vote to go into Europe. Every hon. Member who took part in the debate knows that perfectly well.

Sovereignty of the House has been mentioned, but what is that? It is the sovereignty of the people. People give this House sovereignty, and if we do not have the people behind us, we have no sovereignty. We have witnessed the collapse of a great federal empire in the east, an empire which had a single currency and controlled and regimented its inhabitants. It failed because the people were not consulted and were not behind it. It was brought down by people power.

We are now told that we should go down that road. Jacques Delors, with his beckoning hands, is saying, "You must all come down this road." I have the privilege of sitting both in Strasbourg and in this House. I took part yesterday in the debate in Strasbourg. I have often wondered what was the motivation of the people of Europe in wishing to build another super-state. Super-states have been dangerous to the peace of the world. They never brought peace. They brought trouble in their wake.

I got from the Library at Strasbourg a copy of the poster that I am holding up. It is interesting, because it depicts the future of Europe. The picture in the centre is a copy of a painting by a great Belgian painter— *[Interruption.]* It may be coloured orange, but it is yellow in the centre. It is the tower of Babel. In other words, they have chosen to depict the new Europe as the tower of Babel. We are well aware of the European circle of stars, with five pointed stars, one point facing heaven. Hon. Members will note that the poster tries to square the circle——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It would be better if the hon. Gentleman did not use his visual aid.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have discovered after 45 years of preaching that eye-gate is far more effective than ear-gate. In this poster, the stars are turned upside down. It is wonderful the way in which they turn things upside down and seek to square the circle. We are told that that is the direction we must take.

I listened with interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. He painted a wonderful picture, but I wondered what he was talking about. I recall him telling the people of Britain that, if they voted for Europe, two things would happen—first that we would solve our unemployment problem and, secondly, that we would retain the veto. We have not solved our unemployment problem. The right hon. Gentleman said that he brought unemployment down. I remember when we called him Mr. Million, unemployment having risen at that time to over a million.

I remember the great things that the right hon. Gentleman said would happen as a result of our joining the Common Market, and I was amazed. In fact, our membership has weakened the economy of the United Kingdom. Food prices are higher and there is a deteriorating balance of trade in manufactured goods with the EC, with the consequent loss of many jobs, especially in manufacturing. There is an adverse effect on United Kingdom exports to non-EC countries. Britain has suffered in its trading activities, and the cost of the CAP has been extravagant, to say the least.

The precious money that we pour into the Common Market budget would be better disbursed, by whatever Government are in power, in this country. Think of the £2,769 million that was paid by this country in 1978 to finance the CAP. That was equal to the cost of building more than 100 much-neeeded NHS hospitals, and 14 times more than the amount spent on all the textbooks in all United Kingdom secondary schools. We have heard in the House today details of a false balance.

I am not opposed to co-operation among the nations of Europe, but the time has come to realise that the future for the European nations lies in co-operation rather than incorporation. It lies in unity and not in uniformity, in national sovereignty and not in international submergence. It should be a federation of nations, a family of nations, and not a federation of nations.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Gentleman, in his eloquent address, put an estimate on the cost to this country of the efforts that we had to make —when we had, as he believes, our full sovereignty—twice this century to restrain the exercise of national sovereignty by those who are now our partners in Europe?

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is an irrelevant question, because we could have wars again in Europe. Indeed, a bloody conflict is now occurring, yet the EC is not handling that properly. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, gave a warning to that effect. Surely we

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shall not have wars among ourselves? I thought that the Germans had been regenerated and that the French had been converted. Are we not all good friends and neighbours? It appears that the hon. Gentleman's question is totally irrelevant to the debate.

The British Government need not go cap in hand to Europe. We have five strong bargaining points. First, the United Kingdom is one of the major contributors to the EC budget; secondly, this country is the only net consumer in the EC of many of the agricultural products that are currently in surplus; thirdly, Britain is overwhelmingly a net importer of EC manufactures; fourthly, this country is the most important provider of fishing waters forming the EC's common fishing policy; and fifthly, the United Kingdom is the only EC country sufficient in energy. Those are all vital bargaining counters. In view of that, and the references that have been made to the strength of NATO and Western European Union, we should not be going cap in hand to Europe.

It is regrettable that in this House and Strasbourg there seems to be a desire to divide the people of this nation rather than to strengthen the hands of those who are negotiating for us. When I was in Strasbourg yesterday, the leader of this country's socialists, Mr. Ford, pleaded with the Council not to allow the British Government to dictate terms to the whole of Europe. "Do not let them cripple our common future," was the point of his argument. If Jacques Delors has his way, our nation will be not a cripple but a corpse.

7.49 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It would have been surprising if the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) had enthused on anything based on the treaty of Rome. However, it is a happy day for a Member for East Lothian to be able to support a Labour party motion in a debate on the European Community. It has not always been thus, as old friends of John P. Mackintosh may recall.

This interesting debate can perhaps best be described as a re-run of an old debate between little Englanders and British Europeans. In the old days, the debate within the Labour party was between sceptics, who feared that the European Community would remain forever a market for the benefit of the strong and privileged, and the Euro optimists, who believed that Europe could develop into a Community with social priorities. On one occasion, when I got carried away, I expressed the view that, to deal with the problem of multinational capitalism, we needed multinational socialism and that the European Community was the way to achieve it.

Happily, the doubts of the Euro-sceptics—or most of them—in the Labour party have been overtaken by the social charter, regional policy, environmental initiatives and the drive towards a fairer, broader and more democratic Europe. Surely democracy and the need for democratic accountability are crucial to this debate. There cannot be good government in a democratic society without genuine and credible accountability.

There is a growing democratic deficit within the European Community, as collective powers have developed and accumulated within the Council of Ministers and the Commission. We must redress that deficit. At the same time, to the eternal shame of this House, we have lost local, regional and national accountability in Britain as more and more powers have been centralised in Whitehall. In Scotland, that democratic deficit can be summed up as nine uncompromising Tories imposing their will, despite the fact that they are comprehensively outvoted by the other 63 elected members of Parliament from Scotland. That should be regarded as the basis of a constitutional crisis by any standards.

While we are safeguarding the rights of nations within the European Community, we must follow the Germans and Spaniards in providing democratic accountability and safeguards for the nationl and regions within Europe's conglomerate states. I remind the House that Britain is not and never has been a nation. Rather, it is a union of nations, which the Government have not respected in recent years. The principle of subsidiarity must not stop at Westminster but must go further.

Many Conservative Members have drawn great inspiration from the dreadful speech by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in Bruges in 1988. The speech included the following passage of awe-inspiring hypocrisy:

> "To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, and Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality."

The right hon. Member for Finchley—the second hammer of the Scots—tried to fit the Scottish nation into an identikit Thatcherite personality that was totally alien and abhorrent to most of our national customs, to our traditions and identity. She spent her premiership concentrating unprecedented power at the centre of her Whitehall conglomerate, yet there she was, whingeing about the supression of nationhood.

The supression of historic nations is a dangerous business, as we see in many parts of Europe today. The House would do well to recognise that, within the next couple of years, Scotland will have its own Parliament for a people who overwhelminghly aspire to have home rule within the United Kingdom and direct access to European institutions on the same basis as the German Lander and Spain's national regions.

I appreciate that this debate must be difficult for many people from all political persuasions in England. It must be difficult for English people to reconcile themselves to sharing powers with other nations after such a long history of independence and, latterly, of dominating other nations. But history is marching on, and not even England can opt out of the reality that is developing in Europe. It can stand on the sidelines while everyone else moves on but it cannot stop the process. This is not the Flat Earth Society but the real world, and we should take part in it.

The House could learn a little from Scotland's experience in 1707, when the rulers of Scotland were persuaded—or perhaps bribed—to enter what was described as "an incorporating union" with England. It was very controversial. There was to be a common market, a monetary union and a political union. It left many important national institutions secure—the legal system, the banks, the Church and the administrative structure, but the one fatal flaw was that we sacrificed our

Parliament. Otherwise, that union has been a tremendous success, with shared resources and opportunities, and great achievements over the years. However, the lack of parliamentary accountability over the Executive in Scotland has now degenerated into a running sore, particularly as the political priorities of our two nations have increasingly diverged in the past 50 years.

Increasingly, Scots look to European institutions for protection against the excesses of an unaccountable British Government. This Parliament is supposed to apply democratic scrutiny and accountability to Scotland's national administration, but it does not do so. Under present circumstances, it cannot do so.

The great totem of this debate seems to be the sanctity and sovereignty of this House. It has been described over the years as the Mother of Parliaments but in recent years it would be more appropriate to describe it, for so many of our citizens, as the ugly sister. What sort of mother inflicts a poll tax on its people? What kind of scrutiny system allows a poll tax to be inflicted on a nation? There are lessons to be drawn from that.

There are fundamental flaws in our democratic system, both in the United Kingdom and the European Community. Major constitutional reforms are long overdue and I welcome the fact that the Laour party is leading the debate in those areas. If the House is to rise to the occasion of this debate, it should tell the Prime Minister to go to Maastricht and work positively toward economic convergence and monetary and political union with the European Community, even if it involves going in the direction of federalism. We must also take radical steps to correct the democratic deficit in the European Community and the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister will not do that, but the Labour party will.

7.58 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): There has been a galaxy of talent in this debate from the Front and Back Benches, but the most important speech was made outside the House of Commons yesterday—by Mr. Delors in Strasbourg. The words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) about our being on a conveyor belt to federalism were still ringing in my ears when I picked up the morning papers and read that Mr. Delors had said that Ministers had betrayed everything and that there was no federalism left in the proposals contained in the Council of Ministers' draft. The British had undermined them.

I rubbed my eyes and wondered what it all meant. I then thought that it would be rather fun if MI6 had suborned Mr. Delors and persuaded him—I do not know how—that perhaps he should stop being a federalist. Or was he throwing dust into the eyes of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister so that he would think that he did not have to work so hard? On analysing the speech, I concluded that it was a real cry of anguish from a man who is a genuine federalist and saw his whole work in danger of being betrayed.

Those of us who are frightened of federalism should take heed of the entirely opposite view expressed by Mr. Delors. He said that the Council of Ministers was betraying the principles of the founding fathers, by whom he meant Jean Monnet and the Demochristian leaders—Adenauer, Gaspari and Schumann—who were genuinely federalist. However, they were not the only founders. Winston Churchill was the man who started the process. He thought of European union as something like the old British Commonwealth as defined in the Statute of Westminster. Why did he think that?

People often forget that, at the beginning of the century, we offered Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland a federal empire with a single Government, single navy and total free trade—money did not enter the debate, because we were all on the gold standard. Those countries turned down the offer. So we developed the idea of a Commonwealth, although we did not call it that in those days. In the first world war, in the treaty of Versailles, in the slump of 1929-31 and in the second world war, these countries worked together with us to such an extent that we constituted between us a sort of super-power.

De Gaulle shared Churchill's view. He put it in his caustic way that he wanted to see a Europe on English lines but without the British.

Mr. Delors got it wrong. He said that no intergovernmental group had ever been successful. It is curious that a Frenchman should have got it wrong, because, without the Commonwealth, France probably would not have won the first world war and would not have been rescued from the second.

There have been two great strands of European thinking: the federalist and the union of states, represented by the British and the French. I do not believe that either strand will prevail. A balance will be struck between the two, but at present the balance is wrong. The Council of Ministers should be the Cabinet of Europe and the Commission should be its secretariat, with the Parliament supervising the Commission's work.

President Giscard d'Estaing got it about right when he would not let Roy Jenkins come to the Ministers' dinner and said that he had better come for the cigars and coffee afterwards. We have allowed the Commission to get too much power into its hands. My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) saw the danger clearly, but made a mistake by demonising Mr. Delors. She should have crossed swords not with a civil servant, but with the Chancellor of Germany or the President of France, who were her opposite numbers. She made the mistake of building up the image of Mr. Delors.

We need to strike a balance somewhere in between—we need more institutions than the old Commonwealth had, but certainly not a united states on American lines. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said yesterday when he quoted Churchill, we are planting a tree—I would call it a forest—not putting together a bit of machinery. That tree will grow in its own mysterious way, and when we look back on it we shall be able to say that it is neither a federation nor a confederation, but something new, based on new constitutional forms, which have not yet been devised.

We must remember that behind my right hon. and learned Friend's vision, which I share and hope to try to convey, there is a basic fear. The movement to European union came out of a fear of Germany. That country was down, but there was a fear that it might revive, and revive it has. There are now 80 million—if one includes Austria, not far short of 90 million—Germans. Under de Gaulle and his successors, the French thought that they were the jockey who controlled the German horse. But once the wall fell, all that changed, and we now have not a Paris-Bonn axis, but a Paris-Berlin axis. Is that feasible?

[Mr. Julian Amery]

I remember sitting in the gallery of the French National Assembly in 1954. The French Parliament was then a Parliament, not what it is today, and the Assembly would not accept the plans for German rearmament unless Britain also participated in it. Mr. Herriott was a large man—I remember him well—and it was because of his speech, in which he said that the French would not enter the process unless the British also did so, that the British Government made their proposal for the Western European Union. This was the real foundation of Europe.

The problem is to know how to cope with the greater Germany. There are two ways in which to do so. We took the first option in 1954, when we decided to bring Britain more fully into the European combination. The French would not agree to German rearmament without British participation, so we had to play our full part—if Britain, France and Germany came together with the other European countries, that would constitute an important beginning. Beyond that process, the enlargement of Europe is the key. I am not against deepening and strengthening the combination, but we must bring in northern and eastern Europe. This is our "new frontier". We must do everything to encourage eastern Europe into the Community; nothing must be done to exclude it. My impression is that the Government understand those points well, and on that basis I support the Government tonight.

8.7 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It is a privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), and I am sure that we all appreciate his historical references: he speaks with the experience of having participated in the processes, particularly the second great European civil war, the starting point of the Community.

Another fascinating aspect of this two-day debate is that there have been interesting divisions of opinion across the Floor of the House which are not reflected in the motions. We can see the different emphases placed on issues by the various parties and the problems faced by them in adjusting to the changes taking place in mainland Europe. Whether we use the metaphors of forests or pillars in the debate about ever closer union, the fact is that there is a moving together of the economic, environmental, social, cultural and political strands towards a greater convergence, and we must decide how we relate to that process.

My passport is in my breast pocket near my heart. It is not there is case I have to leave the country urgently, but because it is smaller than the old British passport and fits there more conveniently. It is a pleasant, burgundy colour, and the first words in it are "European Community". I have no problem with a notion of being a European citizen. That phrase is repeated inside the passport in nine languages, one of which, Irish, I recognise as a Celtic language. It is closely related to one of the languages that I speak, Welsh.

Beneath the words "European Community" the passport states:

"United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland"

—the name of the state of which I am a member. However, the name of the state does not coincide with the description of my nationality. The machine-readable plastic on the back of the passport states "British citizen". The birthplace of this particular British citizen is given as Carmarthen, although the authority that issued the passport was the passport office in Liverpool.

The complexity of location, identity and administration does not cause me a personal identity crisis. I feel an affiliation simultaneously with all those different centres of administration and levels of government—European, UKanian, British, Welsh and English regional. I have no difficulty with the idea of unity in diversity, which is what I believe the tower of Babel was about—without going into detail on the theological references of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Like the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), I have always viewed the political structure of the United Kingdom in a diverse way. The United Kingdom is a multilingual, multinational, multicultural, multi-ethnic state. With its diversity and variety of people, it has always been so. All the people of these islands, including people whose families moved here from the new Commonwealth countries, are citizens of Europe. This is not an island race and never has been.

Europe has changed and will change through population movements and through cultural and social changes. This is a subject on which I can speak with authority, because the Celtic culture of which I and other hon. Members are living exhibits is being celebrated this year at a marvellous exhibition in the Palazzo Grassi in Venice which is entitled "The Celts, the Origins of Europe". The Celtic experience in these islands proves conclusively that languages, identities and cultures can and do survive within state structures in which they are not properly represented.

I would have no fear for the future of the English identity, although some English Members seem to have such a fear, as we move towards greater European unity. Such a unity will be based not on the model of the United Kingdom as a unitary state, but on the model of European federalism. I agree with the points made earlier that the likely outcome of the debate on Europe about federalism and nation statism would fall somewhere between the two.

I mention federalism because part of our difficulty in the debate is an understanding of the terms arising from different political traditions. The debate about European union is seen by probably a majority of British people—and certainly by a majority of British politicians—through our experiences of being inside a unitary state in which political power is seen to be located in one place. If we think, as so many hon. Members do, that political powers exist only in one place—that is, here—then when those powers are transferred or seen to be exercised elsewhere, it appears as a threat to sovereignty. In that sense, the British notion of sovereignty differs from that of our European partners because that definition of sovereignty arises from our parliamentary history and procedure.

Arising from that understanding of sovereignty there is a misunderstanding of the definition of federalism. Those who live not in a federal system but in a unitary state cannot apparently understand the notion that political powers can be organised in other ways. For example, within the German federal model, which was imposed upon Germany by the United States and the other allies, there are clearly defined levels of powers and responsibilities. Each level of government is, as it were, sovereign in its

area of competence, and that brings us to that other concept with which the House seems to have difficulty, the concept of subsidiarity.

As the hon. Members for East Lothian and for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said, because the United Kingdom is a unitary state, local government—or what is left of it—regional administrations and the national territorial offices, Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office, are all creations of the Westminster Parliament and can be abolished by it, as were the metropolitan councils and the Government and Parliament of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): And the GLC.

Dr. Thomas: Yes, and the GLC.

That could never happen in a federal system, because, on the mainland, federal system, the powers of local, regional and national authorities and the powers of state governments at all levels are guaranteed as constitutional rights. Subsidiarity is precisely about that. It is about not carrying out functions at multinational level which can be better carried out at member state level, and about not carrying out functions at that level that can better be carried out at national, regional, or local level.

Subsidiarity is the essential principle of how federalism works, operating according to levels of power. Not surprisingly, as Jacques Delors has said, subsidiarity

"comes from a moral requirement, a limit to interference from a higher authority vis a vis a person or a community".

Of course the term has its roots in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church—the need to disperse human political power in a fallen world. I shall not take that theological debate any further.

It is in those contexts that we need to understand the vocation federale as it appears in the Luxembourg draft. It is a process, an ideal, a desire. The fact that the United Kingdom, with its parliamentary system, has a different culture and tradition arising out of the particular history of the unitary system does not make our traditions morally better or more politically effective or efficient. The principle of parliamentary sovereignty has more often blocked than aided the possibility of popular sovereignty. It has made it difficult for politicians and parties to deal seriously with the relationship between citizens and the state and, in particular, the relationship between different parts of the state and its centre.

I am not the only one who argues that the unitary state in the United Kingdom is the preservation into the 20th century of a constitutional order designed for the 17th century. Tom Nairn beautifully described it when he said:

"the state is like the advanced passenger train, a 21st century vehicle intended to run on existing tracks."

What has been said in the debate about parliamentary sovereignty only covers up what has really happened in terms of Government centralisation and corporate decision-taking elsewhere. Our political traditions themselves are now in crisis, and part of that crisis is reflected in the debate. I ask the House not to prevent us from resolving that crisis by refusing to contribute actively to the political culture of that Europe of which we are an integral part.

8.15 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I shall not follow the line of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) because in a sense he has made one of the points that I would have made, which is simply that he reflects the United Kingdom and the fact that, as part of a union, we should understand some of the arguments in a wider sense than is sometimes suggested in the rather navel-contemplating activities which sometimes characterise our debates.

As a confessed Euro-enthusiast, I came to the House to help secure entry to the Community, but I have my reservations and shall touch on them in a moment. There has been a sense of deja vu about much of the debate. Those in favour of membership of the Community are broadly still in favour and those who are against are still against. In that sense, we have not learnt anything new. I do not share the worries of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) about the terms of the motion.

As I look at the complexities of what will be considered at Maastricht, I am convinced that we are exceptionally fortunate to have in my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary representatives of our Parliament and country who will bring back an agreement that is acceptable to the House and the country. However, I should like to draw to the attention of the House and the Government one or two worrying matters. I shall deal first with the role of our Parliament and people and our industry, and then deal with the role of Europe and the wider world beyond.

In terms of the role of our Parliament, I agree with those who feel that it is our responsibility to give leadership and not to fall back on referendums and seek in some way to arouse a great argument in the country which I do not think is there to be aroused. Despite my best endeavours, it is quite difficult in my constituency to attract people to a discussion on the issues before the House. There seems to be a general feeling, in some ways a slight sense of fatalism, that we are in and will not come out. In that sense, some moves are inevitable and we look to our leaders to achieve the best deal that they can—that is the general sentiment.

In considering some of the difficulties, I should like to take into account the views of our business and industrial communities, because little attention has been paid to them in the debate. In the real world, business is years ahead of us in carrying through what the process of being a member of the Community implies. In terms of multinationalism in Europe, we should consider what is happening to large parts of British industry and the effect of flows of inward and outward capital.

We speak in many old-fashioned ways about the British share of the market or about some kind of quota arrangement, but such matters are no longer relevant. I shall take two examples from within or near my constituency, the first of which is Matra Marconi. In its activities, whether in the defence market or the space market, it is difficult to define what is the British share. The shares depend on how the various constituent plants in that company carry out their contractual obligations, and the earnings from these share-outs are spread out across the company and reflected in investment patterns.

In horticulture, which is important in my constituency, joint British and Dutch companies are a major feature.

[Sir Michael Marshall]

The argument that we have had about the Dutch subsidies for heating and so on begin to drop away when we see the shared resources, shared opportunities and shared employment that can come from such joint ventures. My test of Maastricht is to ask how and in what way will the decisions being made assist the broad industrial development of Europe—naturally that includes Britain—while being realistic about what the multinational industries that we are developing mean to us all.

The House will understand why I now move on to deal with a wider world. I am especially concerned that some of the aspects of the proposals for Maastricht will raise the hurdles and make it more difficult for countries in central and eastern Europe and the Baltic states, quite apart from the EFTA countries which have fewer problems, to accede to the EC. Therefore, I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary speaking about the pace of change. I still think that we have been driven at a faster pace than would have been sensible, and that we should have had an opportunity to bring in slightly wider membership before getting into this rather closed shop.

In that regard, I strongly urge the political case for bringing some of the countries of central and eastern Europe into the Community very soon. I am sure that this view is shared throughout the House. The ending of the cold war must be replaced by an alliance wrapped round with hoops of steel. We want to ensure that those countries that are increasingly moving not only into multi-party, democratic ways of government but into a free market are brought without our system. We can then concentrate on the remaining problems.

I believe that we shall see the accession of EFTA countries, bringing with them in their train, because of their special links, the Baltic states, and the pressures will accelerate. However, that process will be inhibited by some aspects of the Maastricht proposals, and that is why the detailed way in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister outlined our position, rejecting and resisting some aspects of those proposals, was helpful.

In that widening of the Community, we are being observed by the newly emerging democracies, not just in Europe but in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We have to find ways within the developments in the Community to assist in the process of democratic and economic development. We have to consider the imbalance of world trade, and we must come back to the GATT question. These are some of the background pieces of the argument that we tend to ignore as we narrow in on what is mainly a domestic debate.

I should have liked to touch on many other aspects of the matter—the future role of the Commission, the European Parliament and, as I said in an intervention, the question whether we are suffering under the six-month rule of presidency moving around—that need to be debated once again. The structure by which we approach some of these questions is far from ideal. However, when we look at the world at large, I hope that we can reflect an outward-looking attitude for Europe, not only towards eastern and central Europe but to the many other questions that remain to be resolved. For example, one third of the world has the problem of too much food and two thirds of it is at or below survival level.

These broader questions must be considered if we are not to be too Eurocentric in our arguments. I have the greatest faith in my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. I hope that, even at this late hour, the Opposition will realise, if they see themselves as serious contenders for government, that there is much to be said for all parties coming together. When we travel abroad, parliamentarians across party lines can be effective and punch our weight. Sometimes when we have internal arguments such as those of the past day or two, we lose some force and credibility. With that plea, difficult though it may be in an election year, I thank the House for listening to my speech.

8.25 pm

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall). However, I know that he will understand if I do not dwell on his remarks. I wish to recall the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), in which he argued that the debate should have a financial approach and should not be guided by Foreign Office or security considerations. He reminded me of Thomas Hobbes's classical work "The Leviathan", in which it is argued that there is no instinct more profound than security in the conduct of human affairs. That is where my concern lies.

I hope that the House will bear with me if I explain my long-standing attachment to Europe. I am one of the few remaining Labour Members of Parliament who defied the party whip on 28 October 1971. However, unlike my hon. Friends who incurred a censure motion or just a rebuke, on a Wednesday night during the following month of November, I had to travel up to Sheffield to face a sacking motion. After a crowded meeting that lasted for more than four hours, I survived by only five votes. That long debate, which had gone on all summer and into the autumn and had been conducted, as some hon. Members will know, in the constituencies as well as here, bit into my soul. I could have regarded the referendum option then as a convenient bolthole, but I did not. I have never doubted that the role of a Member of Parliament worth his salt is to stand his ground, defend his corner and stand by what he believes.

Despite the long-standing attachment to Europe, I now see that a Europe that co-operates whenever possible and agrees to disagree when no common ground can be found is more desirable. I have backed off a federal preference. Because of my experience, I see that we cannot stand on the sidelines while others frame new structures, whether they are economic, political, social or, given my special interest, defence. On the other hand, the difference within Europe on that emerging architecture remain so profound that I can see no alternative to the intergovernmental treaty approach and its implied perception or a European "temple with columns" as against Mr. Delors' "tree with branches".

This preference is confirmed by a brief examination of the prospect for a European community defence policy. We are all aware that the nature of the threat to the security of Europe has changed dramatically. There is a recognition, in the face of potential instability to the east and to the south, of the need for the western alliance to remain strong. It would be dangerous to undercut NATO's sole responsibility for the defence of NATO territory. We need to renew, not replace, the security guarantee that NATO has given us for the past 42 years.

We should also ask ourselves whether we will be prepared to foot the bill for going it alone without the Americans, as if Europe could do so without America's satellite and intelligence network or its transport facilities. I was surprised when the right hon. Members for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that there could be an independent European pillar within the alliance, perhaps within the foreseeable future.

NATO is an alliance which has stood the test of time and also won the confidence of former members of the Warsaw pact. Only a month ago a Soviet figure as senior as Mr. Yuri Deryabin, the Soviet deputy Foreign Minister, was endorsing NATO as the security organisation for all of Europe and seeking formal ties. Yet a clear division has emerged in recent weeks between leading members of the alliance on how a revitalised and reinforced the Western European Union should link NATO and the political arm of the EC.

Most member countries would like to have it both ways —to conserve NATO and its strong links with our north American allies and, at the same time, like the right hon. Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup and for Yeovil—I understand why—they want to give Europe a more pronounced role in its own defence. But the two objectives are not easily reconcilable in practice, as the sharp exchanges over the merits of two rival plans, one British-Italian and the other French-German, have demonstrated.

Britain and Italy want the WEU to be used solely for operations outside the NATO area, thus complementing the alliance and avoiding duplication, while France and Germany have envisaged a corps which might operate both inside and outside—although how that will be done remains unclear.

However, the Rome summit was useful, as the Prime Minister told the House yesterday, in laying down the parameters within which it is feasible for the Europeans to work out their defence co-operation and avoid this particular dilemma. Whether the problem has really been disposed of was the subject of my intervention yesterday in the Prime Minister's speech and today in the Foreign Secretary's speech. Let me explain why.

The Prime Minister played a prominent and commendable part in Rome in devising an agreed framework for a stronger European defence identity within the alliance. He secured agreement among NATO leaders, including Mr. Mitterrand, that NATO had a continuing role to play as the main decision making forum on defence matters in Europe.

But might the isolation of Mr. Mitterrand on this question bode ill for Maastricht when the issue of a common European defence policy will be back on the agenda? The 11:1 vote in Rome against Mr. Mitterrand on this question is not yet reflected in NATO parliamentary circles, as the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) who leads the United Kingdom delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly knows.

Hon. Members from both sides of the House were unable to secure agreement in London a year ago on out-of-area activities—the intended role of the new-look WEU. Nor did they succeed in disposing of the Franco-German proposal at their Madrid meeting before the Rome summit.

Furthermore, Mr. Mitterrand refused formally to acknowledge the primacy of NATO at that summit. Why Not? Neither could he agree to a separate NATO declaration on the Soviet Union and the danger of nuclear proliferation. Why not? At whom was President Bush's admonition directed?

Will it be enough for the Prime Minister at Maastricht, as he implied yesterday, to wave the NATO summit document in Mr. Mitterrand's face if the French leader makes any further move to separate Europe's defence responsibilities from NATO? Clearly, there may be scope and need for further bilaterals before Maastricht.

Thus, whatever pillars may be involved eventually in the construction of the European temple, it is obvious that a defence pillar that is exclusively European cannot be seen as practical and workable. Nor is it considered desirable in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Nor is there support anywhere in Europe for a policy which might cut across NATO or duplicate its military structure.

The security structures that we choose must be properly thought through and practicable. They must avoid duplication and must in all forms be complementary to NATO. That approach is not possible in a federal context. It can only be realistically pursued on the basis of intergovernmental treaties.

8.34 pm

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): The House listened to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) with interest and with some admiration, knowing his record on the European issue.

I have listened for almost 13 hours to virtually all the speeches that have been made during the past two days, and they have brought back two memories. First, they have brought back memories of my time as a Minister negotiating in Brussels. The highlight occurred while I was at the Department of Transport. In those days, responsibilities were divided between the Department of Transport and the Department of Trade, which looked after air transport. Thus, when I went to Brussels I went with the then Secretary of State for Trade, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). Lunch was organised during a break in negotiations and to facilitate discussions a translator was put between myself and my right hon. Friend. This evening, I needed no translator to understand his message.

The second memory was as a Back Bencher in 1971, when I took part in the debate on entry into the EC and voted for entry. We in the 1970 intake took great interest in the views of others elected in that year. It is a simple statement of fact that two of the most vociferous, persistent and eloquent opponents of the EC then are now the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Foreign Secretary. So we are not entirely prepared to take lectures from the Opposition Front Bench on Europeanism. We hear what they say, but we also remember their opposition to Community entry in the 1970s, their fight to withdraw from the Community in the 1980s and their extraordinary position of subservience today.

Labour's European travels have been one of the greatest political mystery tours of the post-war years. No one knows where the journey is likely to take them next, but one thing that has been made clear by this debate is that no one in his right mind would believe that our negotiations in Europe should be left to the Leader of the Opposition.

[Sir Norman Fowler]

I speak as someone who voted for our entry into the Community, who supported and supports the establishment of a free and single market and who, like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, believes that the Community can help to secure a lasting peace across the continent.

At the same time, it would be foolish to believe that the British public are not concerned about some of the developments inside the Community. They are concerned about what they see as an unnecessary interference in our national life. They are concerned about lawless acts being taken to prevent legitimate trade. They are concerned about the Commission for ever seeking to extend its operations. That is not an argument for leaving the Community, but it is an argument for the British public being represented by a tough Government who, while committed to the Community, are prepared and able to fight for the kind of Europe that we want, a Europe where the maximum is left to the nation state.

That is why the Government are right to set out their opposition to a federal Europe. I certainly do not want a united states of Europe, and I suspect that few Conservative Members would. That is why my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was so right to say that much can be achieved by pure co-operation in, for example, police work, and why he was also right to set out his opposition to an extension of Community competence in areas such as social policy.

Let it be clear what I say about social policy. For example, I believe that employee involvement is one of the great challenges which stand before British industry. I sit on the board of a major company which has a worker director. I do not believe that that is the work of the devil, but such decisions are best decided at national level. We are saying not that employee involvement is in some way wrong, but that such decision making should be at the national, local or company level and voluntary. If a party wishes, for example, to have a minimum wages policy, let it set that out, as I suspect the Opposition will do, in its manifesto and argue it in an election. But it is completely unnecessary to have a Community policy on such things.

Much of our debate has concerned economic and monetary union, and, in particular, the single currency. What we must decide tonight is not whether to accept a single currency here and now, but whether we should reject it here and now, without further discussion or consideration and without allowing the arguments to develop.

I confess that, over the past few months, I have not stumped the country advocating a single European currency in every constituency, but it strikes me as absurd to walk away at this stage, for several reasons. First, the Government are set to secure an agreement that will allow us to keep our options open in regard to whether we want such a currency and, at the same time, to influence the eventual outcome. That is a substantial negotiating success, on which the Government should be congratulated.

Secondly, industry would think us mad if we simply walked away. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall). One of the advantages that we recycled Cabinet Ministers have is an involvement in industry; of course, some of the unreconstructed Cabinet Ministers have that as well. It is obvious to us that industry now considers Europe to be crucially important: Europe is the home market. We should at least listen when organisations such as the CBI set out the transaction costs of hedging, and all the other costs, and advocate movement towards a single currency. We need not accept the argument in its entirety, but it is certainly an argument against rejection at this stage.

Thirdly, if we walked away now, we should have to accept the probability that the other Community members would form their own agreement. Such an agreement might be outside the terms of the Rome treaty, but it could nevertheless be very effective. That, by definition, would mean that we would play no part whatever in the developments. The Government, surely, are entirely right: by keeping our options open, they preserve our national interests, allowing us to weigh the alternatives when the time comes.

Some now argue for a referendum—and it is fair to add that some proponents of that view do not seek to give voice to a long-held belief in the extension of democratic rights which they have already presented to the country consistently, month by month and year by year; their real purpose is to find a way of killing anything that comes from Maastricht. If that cannot be done in one way, it must be done in another. There was no referendum on the Single European Act, and I personally remember no clamour for such a referendum around the Cabinet table at which I then sat.

I can say with absolute certainty that, over the ensuing months, it will be Parliament which decides. The crucial issue was identified by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who rightly said that what the public must decide was which party best represented their interests. Is it the Labour party, which, over most of the past 20 years, has traditionally expressed antagonism to the Community, and which has now attained the uncritical zeal of the convert? Or is it the Conservative party, which took the country into the Community, helped to create the single market and makes it clear today that it will continue to fight for our national interests?

No one needs a crystal ball to know the outcome. A few days ago, an opinion poll carried out by ICM showed that, by a margin of two to one, the public preferred negotiations to be conducted by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, rather than by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Foreign Secretary.

I am convinced of one thing: that margin deserves to be increased still further following this debate. I think that the public will believe that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary are exactly the right people to represent our interests in Brussels.

8.44 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Right on cue, a convert rises.

Undoubtedly, the people in this country who are the most excited about Maastricht are the young. Well they might be, because they have most to gain from the creation of a single European currency and political union. I outlined my views on both those subjects on 15 June 1990 in a 40-minute speech. I shall not attempt to repeat what I said then, for repetition makes bores of us all in the

House; I am glad, however, that the scepticism that greeted what I had to say about the benefits of a single European currency has since been replaced by understanding and support in several quarters. The translucent message from the corridors of power, in Europe and in Whitehall, is that a single currency will be established, and that we shall be part of it. The point of no return has been passed.

I consider the idea that the issue should be decided by a referendum nothing short of bizarre. In the run-up to such a referendum, do the Government really intend to put through the letterboxes of Britain 17 million textbooks entitled "Fixed Exchange Rates and the Economic Consequences of EMU, by John Major"? Judging by the speech that the Prime Minister made yesterday, he is as capable of writing seriously about such matters as was Don Giovanni of writing a book entitled "Everything You Wanted To Know About Celibacy ".

Speaking more generally, I suppose that I could sum up the Prime Minister's speech—without rancour—as timid, devoid of national purpose and lacking in inspiration. As he spoke, I asked myself whether the next 100 years of British history were to reflect the barren nature of his personality: the answer must be never, never, never.

In my view, the creation of a single currency will be a major determinant of the course of British history during the next 100 years. I do not think that we should either underestimate or understate the magnitude of its consequences. I believe that monetary union is political union, and that the creation of a single currency is federalism. Indeed, the creation of a single currency is federalism without democracy.

That is why the treaty on political union at Maastricht cannot be seen as some troublesome adjunct to the treaty on monetary union. The treaty on political union must begin to supply the democratic foundations of a devolved democratic federal system of government, without which monetary union will never survive. The one is inconceivable and unworkable without the other.

Recently, an ambassador told me that issues such as defence and foreign policy were surely on a different plane from economic issues, involving as they did considerations of history, culture and identity. That is a plausible thesis; certainly, foreign policy and defence complicate the issue of political union and the directon of federalism.

Let us consider this, however. One does not need to be an economic genius to understand that, when a country goes to war, the value of its currency is threatened, often decimated. Does any hon. Member seriously think that, after Britain has signed up for a single currency, we could go to war on our own and expect the 11 countries who share the same currency to stand idly by and see the value of their currency wrecked, for ever depreciating, just because Britain was in one of its periodic warmongering fits? Of course not. With a single currency in place, that could no more happen than the Government of the United Kingdom could today allow Wales or Scotland to go off and fight a war of its own. With a single currency, a common defence and foreign policy becomes inevitable and inexorable.

One of our tasks in the House is to explain that honestly to the public. I am, of course, conscious that, as a convert to some important aspects of European integration, I risk being impeached for a lack of consistency; however, I am always happy to recall the words of Ralph Emerson, who said:

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statemen and philosophers and divines."

That brings me naturally to the scribblings of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). He provides the intellectual thrust and gravitas of the arguments of those who oppose monetary and political union. He set out his views in May 1990 in that weighty political magazine—I have a copy—*The Field*. His article is illustrated with huge colour photographs of the white cliffs of Dover in case the alligazoos who read it were tempted to miss the point.

The right hon. Member for Chingford said that he cannot go along with the negotiations at Maastricht because he wants to protect Britain from "rabid dogs and dictators"—some might say from himself. He said:

"Sterling looks set to be masticated by EMUs, ERMs and ECUs before being made fodder for that monetary successor to the Panzer, the Deutsches Bundesbank."

Have you noticed, Mr. Speaker, how the right hon. Gentleman is moderating language and style in his old age? There is no mention of U-boats or the Luftwaffe.

In his ignorance, the right hon. Member for Chingford —I have given him notice of this—sees British history as a continuum stretching back to the dawn of time. He is quite unable to understand that the political settlement of 1688 had little in common with what went before, that the post-1832 settlement had little in common with the 1688 settlement and that the political situation today has virtually nothing in common with the post-1832 settlement.

What I cannot understand is that the right hon. Member for Chingford and the Bruges group seem to support the existing system of government in Europe, which I would describe as a huddle of 13 bureaucracies in Brussels. Why do those people not want to bring democracy to a European Government that is currently bureaucratic, elitist, oligarchic and secretive? Perhaps it is because that is precisely the type of Government that the Conservatives developed in Britain in the 1980s.

I believe that political union in Maastricht must put an end to that sort of Government by creating a strong European Parliament at the head of accountable, devolved, democratic federal structures.

There is the question of sovereignty. In an article in *The Guardian* on 12 November 1991 the right hon. Member for Chingford said—it is a widely held view by those who did not read history at school—

"Sovereignty cannot be shared or pooled. It is either here in our hands, or elsewhere in those of other institutions."

It is possible that, in a period described by historians as the dark ages, sovereignty was indissoluble and indivisible. However, since then we have seen the rise of mercantilism in Tudor times, the rise of capitalism in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and the rise of socialism. Under each of those ideologies, sovereignty has always, to a greater or lesser extent, been pooled between nation states. In short, perhaps for a period of 700 years in British political history, sovereignty has not been to be indissoluble and indivisible.

There is a nasty side to the opposition to the treaty on political union expressed by a species known as Essex men and Essex politicians. They tend to be vulgar, philistine, xenophobic and nationalist. Surely, because we cannot afford those ideas to infest Europe, we need political union and a federal Government as a bulwark for freedom and civilised living.

There is a litmus test for voting tonight. If the right hon. Member for Chingford can support the Government

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

motion, we will know that their motion is fatally flawed. If he rejects it, perhaps it has some merit. The real merit lies in the amendment to the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), and I shall be supporting that.

8.54 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has all the enthusiasm of a convert, and, if he does not mind, I will not follow his line.

For the past four hours, I have been pondering the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls): why we are discussing political union in Europe when we have not achieved an internal market. It is a good question. Part of the answer must lie in the fact that many of the other countries in Europe do not want an internal market.

When I was a Minister responsible for aviation or in the Departments of Energy and the Environment, I frequently went to the Council of Ministers. Invariably, I found an agenda before me on which the first item was often a British motion to extend the internal market and create freedom—whether it be for air fares, investment in other airlines, flying wherever one wanted in Europe or a free flow of energy around Europe. Invariably, that first item was voted down. That occurred because of national interest.

In the case of aviation, it was because the Germans were concerned about their airline. I can recollect an occasion on which the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewksbury (Mr. Ridley) was present. He was so impressed by the protectionism of the German Minister for Aviation that he called him "Herr Lufthansa". The same was true of energy. The Germans were concerned about the ravages that might occur in their country because of cheap French nuclear-based electricity.

The second item, which was often proposed by the French and Germans, was for greater standardisation in Europe. In the case of aviation, it called for Europewide air security or air safety regime and in the case of energy, it called for common standards of energy conservation. The other members of the Council usually voted in favour of that item.

The third item was the press release discussion, when it was decided that the British position was anti-communautaire and that the French and German position was communautaire.

The fourth item was the bribe which was handed out to the Portuguese, Greeks and others who had disagreed with the first item but voted in favour of the second and third items. So my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West has his answer. We are discussing this rush towards political union largely because other countries do not agree with the internal market and many of the measures associated with it.

I accept that this is a Christmas stocking motion, with presents for everybody. The present that I happily unwrap for myself is the commitment against federalism. I voted in favour of our entry of the EC, and I voted for the Single European Act. I did so on both occasions because I believed that it would be in Britain's interests to be a member of a free trading, confident and outward-looking association of European nations. I did so because I believed, as did other hon. Members, that co-operation between the nations of Europe was better than what had gone before. However, at all times I voted for a common market, not for a common country.

It has been said that the Single European Act was the watershed at which point essential political sovereignty was surrendered. That is not true. The Single European Act was about trade, association and co-operation. The draft Dutch treaty on economic and monetary union is about co-ordination, unity and single government.

I agree that central—not peripheral—to the debate about federalism is the issue of a single currency. The relationship between monetary and economic union and political union is recognised by the draft Dutch treaty on monetary union. That treaty rejoices in the relationship. The point is recognised by the German Government, and it was recognised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he gave evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

If there is a single currency, there is political union. The one is part of the other. The reason for that has been made clear on several occasions during our debate. In order to operate a single currency, there must by definition be single monetary, interest rate, budgetary, fiscal and taxation policies. In other words, there must be a single economic authority which in turn must provide the basis for single government. Unless that federal state is to be a tyranny, there must be a single sovereign Parliament with a final say over the raising of taxes.

I am against all that and, I hope, so are the Government. What is more, opinion polls now agree that the majority of the British people are on our side. That is why I will support the Government tonight. The Government are right to negotiate to protect NATO, to constrain the role of the Commission and to insist that other states obey the rules of the internal market as we do. They are right to press forward the development of an outward-looking free trading association of independent states. That is a noble concept. It would give European countries collectively and separately a positive influence on the rest of the world. That is the opposite of a protectionist, introverted, centralised federal state of Europe which is now being proposed by the Opposition and their socialist allies around Europe.

That is ironic, but not surprising. At any rate, the Labour party has barred itself from asking basic questions which one would have thought was the role of a normal Opposition. Perhaps I should ask some of those questions. What is this rush to political union all about? What is in it for us? To what end is it now proposed that we risk the sacrifice of the power of our people, through Parliament, to rule themselves? Are we really sure that a non-electable, non-accountable central bank on the German model is, in the long term, preferable to economic management by elected politicians? Do we seriously believe that the French, Germans and Italians have a secret formula for political stability and sound democracy which we fail to emulate at our peril?

A single currency would be the binding element of a federal state of Europe. I will support the Government tonight. I wish them well in their defence of British interests at Maastricht. However, that will not be the final say. That will come when we know what has been achieved at Maastricht. It will come if and when Parliament is asked

to ratify what has been done. I state this clearly to avoid misunderstanding: on the issue of a single currency, there can be no compromise. If Parliament was asked to ratify a treaty which I believed made British accession to a single currency inevitable, I would not vote for it, and many of my colleagues would feel the same. The British public overwhelmingly support such a position.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. John Smith.

9.3 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not normal procedure to allow a representative of the Liberal Democrats to contribute during a day's debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises the difficulties facing Mr. Speaker and the Chair.

Mr. Smith: Over the two days of this important debate, hon. Members have explored almost every nook and cranny, to use a contemporary expression, of the implications for this country and for Europe of the treaty amendments which may emerge from the European Council meeting at Maastricht, itself the culmination of two intergovernmental conferences which have been proceeding throughout the year. There have been echoes of previous debates—the long, sometimes weary saga of the consideration of Britain's place and role in Europe.

It is worth remembering that it is 20 years since the House took the decision to join the European Community. A very great deal has changed since then, although that has perhaps not always been recognised by the regular participants in our national sovereignty debate. We have today and yesterday been back over the referendum ground. Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) aced the Prime Minister with her demand for a referendum. She was not dissuaded by the fact that the Prime Minister had apparently firmly rejected a referendum in a reply to an intervention by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Later, the Prime Minister appeared, to use one of the right hon. Lady's phrases about the Foreign Secretary, to "go a bit wobbly".

Late last night, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who wound up for the Government, repeated the wobble by saying that we could not now decide whether there would be a possible referendum in 1996. I gather today that prime ministerial sources are trying to roll back to the position that the Prime Minister had before the right hon. Lady sprang her initiative upon him. That is hardly an example of clear, firm government. In its own way, it is a very revealing insight into the influences upon this Administration.

Hon. Members have, as is quite proper and according to their point of view, sought to draw lessons from the history of our relations with the other states of Europe. For my own part, I believe that, in the 1950s, successive British Governments made an incorrect assessment of the strength of the movement to found the European Community. It was believed, first of all, that it would not happen and that, if it did, it would not amount to very much. However, with the perspective of history, we can now see how wrong such a judgment was. One might also note a similar error in judging the potential success of the establishment of the European monetary system in the late 1970s.

I seek to draw the conclusion from those experiences that in this country we have a tendency to underrate the forces behind European integration. We should have learnt that one of the penalties of standing back is lack of influence on the design and development of European institutions which eventually we feel obliged to join. Far from diminishing, the forces behind what we might call ever-closer union are increasing. Within the existing Community we are seeing the establishment of the single market after 1992.

I have little doubt that two of the major reasons why economic and monetary union is more likely to become a reality this time round is that a single market is being established and that nearly all the member states of the European Community are now members of the exchange rate mechanism. Having regard to some of the right hon. Lady's observations yesterday, some might consider it ironic that she was the Prime Minister when the crucial decisions in both those matters were made.

There are other factors of great importance to the debate. Capital movements have been almost entirely liberated over the whole OECD area, creating an entirely new situation from that in which Governments operated exchange controls and restraints on capital movement. In trade and in finance, we live in an increasingly interdependent world, and most certainly in a much more integrated Europe. In those circumstances, it seems to be essential that we are prepared to recognise the limits of theoretical national economic sovereignty which the real world that we live in imposes.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman were going to Maastricht in a few days' time as a member of a Labour Government, would he give an irrevocable commitment to moving Britain towards a single currency? Will he answer, yes or no?

Mr. Smith: I will deal precisely with that point, but I ask the hon. Gentleman to allow me to develop one or two other aspects as a necessary background to my later comments on the issue that he raises. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] It is the custom to allow the contributors to a debate to make speeches in their own way. I have given an undertaking to answer the question of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) very directly. If that suits him, it should suit other right hon. and hon. Members

Before I was diverted, I was making the point that there are limits to theoretical economic national sovereignty, which are imposed by the realities of the world in which we live. What is more, we ought to be prepared to help to create a system that restores, at least in part, the influence that Governments should be able to have over economic and monetary policy. That is why Labour favours progress towards economic and monetary union—provided that the United Kingdom economy is made strong enough to gain rather than to lose from that experience, and that there is an adequate framework of accountability.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I hope that point is clear to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, because he makes a very helpful point. However, I remind him that, on the "Today" programme this morning, he said that he agreed with the proposition that there is no need to make an immediate move towards a single currency. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that he seems during the last few hours to have come over to the Government's position—which is that there is no need to make an immediate move to a single currency? It appears so, from his remarks on the radio this morning—or does he distance himself from them now?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should familiarise himself with the discussions at the intergovernmental conferences.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. and learned Gentleman should cut the abuse, and try to answer my question.

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will do me the courtesy of listening to the answer that he invited me to give, without shouting at me from a sedentary position in a most boring and discourteous manner.

No one in the whole Community is proposing an immediate move towards a single currency. The draft treaty provides that in 1996, or by the end of 1996 at the latest, the Commission will prepare a report to the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers, and thereafter to the European Council. The final decision that is postponed.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I have already given way a number of times. The final decision—this is the assumption on which those engaged in the debate are operating—will be made in 1996 or 1998—perhaps later, for all I know.

Mr. Lawson: What the right hon. and learned Gentleman just said is absolutely right, but alongside the treaty on economic and monetary union, there is a declaration, which must be decided now. Is it Labour's position that the declaration should be signed, or that it should not be signed?

Mr. Smith: I am not clear whether there is a declaration currently in the discussions. That rather depends on what provision is made for the so-called opt out, as to whether it is general or particular. The declaration that I saw made mention of a fast transition towards a single currency, which is not terribly consistent with the notion of real economic convergence. A single currency—it is surprising that the Prime Minister and other Government Members made little reference to this—would offer Britain some advantages, and I will describe what they could be.

We could achieve a low rate of inflation, low interest rates, and a strong and stable currency—but only if we took steps to achieve real economic convergence, which would mean adopting economic policies that stimulated investment, promoted innovation and new technology, strengthened our regions, and built a world-class work force through a relentless commitment to education and training of the kind for which Labour constantly argues. Those policies are vital for our economic success in the 1990s whatever decisions are taken on economic and monetary union. It is absolutely clear that a country with a strong economy has little to fear from a single currency.

In addition to the vital requirement of real economic convergence, it is equally important to secure a proper framework of accountability for economic and monetary union if it occurs. We have heard nothing from the Government about their participation in the discussions in the economic intergovernmental conference about the accountability of the proposed European central bank and the allocation of responsibilities for economic and monetary policy between the Economic and Finance Ministers and the proposed central bank.

The Labour party has argued consistently for the bank to operate in a stronger framework of political accountability than the present draft treaty proposes. Like the French Government, we believe that ECOFIN—the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers—should play a crucial role in determining overall economic and monetary policy. We believe that it is important, for example, that the setting of the external exchange rate for a single currency should be a matter for ECOFIN.

On those and other matters, we simply do not know what the British Government have argued for or against, because Ministers have not reported back to the House on those issues. It would be appropriate tonight for the Chancellor to set out clearly the Government's position on the framework of accountability, which is one of the main areas of discussion at the intergovernmental conference. To my knowledge, we have not yet heard from Ministers about how the central bank should be controlled or about the role of the Finance Ministers in the proposed new system. Instead, when they last reported to the House in our debates on economic and monetary union in January, the Government told us that the main thrust of their policy was to advance the cause of the hard ecu.

Let us remind the House briefly of the history of the Government's approach to such matters. The Government's early response to the Delors report was totally dismissive. However, once it became clear that there was real impetus behind the initiative, the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley, announced at the Madrid summit in 1989 that there would be a British alternative to the Delors plan. The then Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), was not present at the Madrid summit, which might help to explain why the Treasury was taken totally by surprise by the Prime Minister's initiative.

On 18 September 1989, writing in the *Financial Times*, that distinguished commentator, Mr. Samuel Brittan, observed:

"One very senior British official first heard of Mrs. Thatcher's promise, after the Madrid summit, to table alternative ways of achieving monetary union to that of the Delors Committee on his car radio."

Mr. Brittan then said that the official, whom I am reliably informed is now permanent secretary to the Treasury,

"was so astonished that he nearly drove his car into a tree."

That was the genesis of the plan for competing currencies. It did not have a long life. It is, as I recall it, the so-called "market solution", in which currencies would engage in a Darwinian-type struggle for survival. Our Community partners soon put the hems on that one. There was no seconder to the motion.

In the following year, the Government tried again. The then Chancellor, the present Prime Minister, launched the so-called "hard ecu plan". It was first revealed at a lunch meeting when he spoke to the German industry forum on 20 June 1990. The idea was that a 12th currency, a

common currency, would be established, which could never be devalued, and which might develop into a single currency—or so some thought.

Whatever else could be said about the hard ecu—about its merits or demerits as an instrument of economic policy—it had its political uses for the Conservative party. It enabled the then Prime Minister to claim that it could not develop into a single currency. It enabled the then Chancellor, the present Prime Minister, to say that, if peoples and Governments so chose, it could develop into a single currency. It even enabled the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to argue before an astonished House of Lords Select Committee:

"a single currency could actually happen more quickly going down this path."

In the January debate, the Chancellor warmed to the theme of the hard ecu. It was his initiative to be taken in the intergovernmental conferences. In that same month, he published detailed proposals, which were available at about the time of the debate. They were called "Economic and Monetary Union: Beyond Stage One." In the months thereafter, the Chancellor told us that there was growing support in the Community for his plan. One country after another was said to be treating with increasing respect this deft and ingenious British plan. How strange it was, therefore, that yesterday the Prime Minister, the veritable architect of the hard ecu, no longer sang its praises. Indeed, nothing has been heard of it since May this year.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: Let me finish this point.

In the *Financial Times* of 13 May, there was a headline: "Hard ecu plan to be reviewed". The story read:

"Britain may back down in its hard ecu plan. . . . The proposal will be reviewed by senior UK officials in the next few weeks as a goodwill gesture to Britain's partners."

That story was undoubtedly read with pleasure and relief in the capitals of the Community, but the Chancellor was not pleased at the briefing activities of his Treasury officials—his increasingly desperate Treasury officials. Speaking at a conference at the Grosvenor House hotel on 30 May, the Chancellor struck back. He said:

"I am happy to rebut suggestions that we are abandoning the hard ecu. On the contrary, the ideas which led us to put forward our proposals are making some headway with our partners. . . . We are often condemned for maintaining our position in the face of widespread disagreement, but we are certainly not so perverse as to throw away a good idea just because our partners agree with us!"

He put an exclamation mark after it.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No.

With regret I have to tell the House that that last reference by the Chancellor was, I fear, the last known sighting of the hard ecu.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Smith: In recounting these events, I am reminded of the story of the hunting of the snark, in which that mythical animal was destroyed. Something similar happened to the hard ecu. So I must ask the Chancellor the pertinent questions. Did it die? When did it die? Who killed it? Where is it buried? I hope that the Chancellor can give us a full report on the sad demise of the hard ecu.

It is abundantly clear from the draft treaty that it contains no hard ecu, and no common or 12th currency proposal. There was not even an agreement to harden the existing basket ecu mechanism. For example, the proposal in article 109E of the draft is that the currency composition of the ecu basket will be frozen at the start of stage 2.

The ineluctable conclusion to which one is driven is that the hard ecu was never more than a device to paper over the cracks in the Conservative party. It achieved precisely nothing for Britain's interests in the negotiations. That is a theme which sadly continued to be dominant in the Government's approach to these matters.

In the absence of the crack-covering hard ecu, what do the Government propose by way of amendments, if any, to the current Dutch treaty text? Did they make any proposal on how the central bank should be governed? Are they content with what is proposed? Do they wish to strengthen the role of Economic and Finance Ministers, as I believe would be right? If so, what proposals do they intend to make in the remaining weeks of negotiation?

We believe that ECOFIN should be responsible for setting the Community's overall economic policy. In order to do so, its secretariat needs to be strengthened greatly, with a permanent staff so that it is capable of carrying out the task of surveillance and economic co-ordination. It already has that role, but it could play a greater role in future.

There is one matter on which I agree with what the Prime Minister said yesterday. That is the important question of budget deficits. He said that negotiations were still proceeding on that matter and that there had been no acceptance of a binding element in stages 2 or 3.

As presently drafted, the treaty is far too rigid. The 3 per cent. figure in the protocol seems arbitrary and surely, at the very least, there must be some common definition of what a deficit is considered to be when member states have different Government accounting practices.

Since I am agreeing, in principle, with the line that the Government took on that matter, I hope that the Chancellor can enlighten us further on what the Government propose.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Was the right hon. and learned Gentleman present with the Leader of the Opposition at the conference in Madrid in December last year when a policy of a binding minimum rate of taxation throughout the Community was agreed? That agreement clearly referred to direct taxation. Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman care to elaborate on that, because we have not heard much about it from the Labour party?

Mr. Smith: I do not think any more mischievous allegation has been made during these discussions than what the chairman of the Conservative party wrote in the letter that I have here. He explicitly referred to capital taxation; that is absolutely clear from the context of the document.

Since we are delving into such matters, I took the trouble to inquire about another aspect of our relationship with Europe today—the Conservative party's application to join the European People's party parliamentary group

[Mr. Smith]

as an allied member. I have here a letter from the chairman of the Conservative party to Mr. Wilfried Martens, the president of the European People's party. He says:

"I would like to take this opportunity to state once again that this application"—

that is the application by the Tories to be allowed to tie up with someone; they have never managed it in all the history of the European Parliament, but they are feeling a bit lonely—

"enjoys my full support and that of the Prime Minister as Leader of the Conservative Party."

I was intrigued by the fact that a letter sent on behalf of Conservative Members of the European Parliament says the following:

"I should like to emphasize that my colleagues fully support, *inter alia:* The institutional development of the community into a European Union of a federal type".

I think that the chairman of the Conservative party would be better employed sorting out a few of those matters before he comes back to the House. I apologise for raising such matters in detail, but it is the duty of the House to do so—*[Interruption.]* I shall no doubt be corrected and hon. Members can always intervene, but I have it here in writing, and it would be surprising if it were wrong.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not normal in parliamentary debate that, when a serious allegation is made against the Prime Minister, he at least gets up off his bottom and tries to respond to it? Can we not invite the Prime Minister to do so?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: I have mentioned our views on the development of economic and monetary union, but one matter that we have not touched upon sufficiently in the debate is the curious view that the Conservative party has on the social charter and the social action programme.

In the remarkable speech by the right hon. Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) this afternoon, it was as unusual as it was refreshing to hear a Conservative voice talking of the need for equity and social justice within the European Community. The right hon. Gentleman recognised, as we do, that it is hardly consistent to argue for qualified majority voting to create the single market if one opposes it on the social action programme, which gives rights for employees. It is staggering that the Government will apparently take the negotiations at Maastricht to the brink of failure because of their obstinate, dogmatic insistence that they will have nothing to do with competence in the social field or with majority voting in that area.

The Government could change their policy on that precise matter without great difficulty. If they are worried about whether it is the right thing to do, I remind them of an article that the Secretary of State for the Environment wrote in *The Times* on 29 November 1989, in which he said:

"We paid a heavy price when others designed the common agricultural policy. It would be unforgivable to repeat that mistake in industrial and financial policies. The same argument applies to the Social Charter".

That was well said by the Secretary of State for the Environment. I hope that he will speak to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and help them to come to a wiser view.

In the course of this debate, we have understood that the real priorities for Europe in the years that lie ahead are for the Community to become wider, more cohesive and more democratic. Those are certainly the Labour party's objectives. We have aims and objectives—the same cannot be said of the Conservative party. In the same Lobby tonight will be those who want a referendum and those who do not, and those who want a single currency and those who do not. Most remarkable of all, walking through the same Lobby will be the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and the right hon. Member for Finchley, thus demonstrating the organised hypocritical disunity that passes for a Conservative party.

That is why it will be not only a duty but a pleasure to vote against the Government tonight.

9.32 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): This has been an important and historic debate. It has been a remarkable occasion, with some memorable contributions. It is not every day when one former Prime Minister intervenes in the speech of another. We have heard some outstanding speeches on both sides of the House. On the Opposition Benches, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffey) made outstanding speeches. My right hon. Friends the Members for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) made powerful contributions.

Obviously, it was right that the House should have an opportunity to express its views and vote on the broad negotiating stance which the Government will take. The motion allows the House to do that. If agreement is reached in Maastricht, the House will have a further opportunity to debate and vote on the detailed proposals in due course.

Tonight, I wish to concentrate largely on monetary union and answer some of the questions raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). First, however, may I make some observations on political union? Foreign and security policy is an area in which the Twelve can and do work together. Europe is an increasingly integrated region, and the individual members of the Community are likely to have common interests and many common views, especially on regional questions such as eastern Europe, to which several hon. Members referred, and relationships with the Soviet Union. The Community has a legitimate interest in those issues. At the same time, the individual countries have different histories, worldwide connections and interests. It is essential that we continue to retain the freedom to act alone in our own national interests.

It also goes without saying that foreign and defence policy—questions that can involve issues of peace and war—cannot be subject to mechanistic voting procedures, which would be a recipe for less rather than more agreement. That is why, in the negotiations, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has placed the emphasis on

co-operation between individual states for agreement outside the treaty mechanism and has said that agreement should be by consensus.

Much of the debate in the past two days has been taken up with arguments about the position of this House. We are rightly jealous of the power of Parliament to make laws, to tax and to spend. Of course our institutions and practices must be subject to examination, but we are voting tonight not for ourselves but for those whom we represent. It is my conviction that the British people overwhelmingly wish to reserve those fundamental powers for this House in this country.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): It has long been Government policy that there should be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without a referendum, and that even a merging of sovereignty between Belfast and Dublin could not be entrusted to this House alone. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House the difference between that and the issue raised by the demand for a referendum which my right hon. and hon. Friends fully supported when it was made in 1975?

Mr. Lamont: The Prime Minister has made it clear that we do not think that, on the issue whether we should move to single currency—an issue that will not arise for six or seven years—it would be appropriate now to have a referendum. In addition, he made it clear that he did not feel it was appropriate even later for there to be a referendum on this issue.

I was referring to the fact that profound constitutional and political questions are raised in the debate, though they have not been seriously addressed by the Opposition. The Prime Minister has made it clear that we are against the idea of a European Government or a European state, and for that reason the Foreign Secretary has taken a cautious approach to any extensions of Community competence or to proposals to increase the powers of the European Parliament. We reject wide-ranging increases in the legislative powers of the European Parliament.

We are prepared to consider a right for the European Parliament to block legislation approved by the Council. But the scope of such a provision should be strictly limited, and certainly more limited than is the case in the current draft. This negative assent procedure would of course not mean that the European Parliament could initiate legislation, still less impose anything that did not command the requisite support in the Council of Ministers. We have also tabled proposals to increase the accountability of the Commission—asked for by Opposition Members—to the European Parliament, particularly in its management of the Community budget.

A number of my hon. Friends have noted that the draft treaty contains some extensions of Community competence and the scope of majority voting in the Council. Obviously, I cannot go over many of them tonight, but, unlike the Opposition, we are profoundly sceptical about the need for major new extensions of Community competence. There is no need for extended Community competence in issues such as industrial relations and social security. If wide-ranging social policies were imposed throughout the Community, they would increase unemployment and have massive economic costs.

I can understand that Opposition Members take a different view on some of these issues and policies, but, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said yesterday, that is not the real issue. The real question is why they want to take away the right of the British people to make the final decision on these matters.

We believe that the political union IGC could deliver a constructive and useful package of reforms of the Community and its institutions, but the Community must not overreach itself. We cannot draw up grandiose, impractical blueprints for a structure that will not stand the weight it would be called on to bear. The consequences of over-ambition would be disastrous for the Community and for Britain, and we could not accept that.

I come to the negotiations about economic and monetary union. While these have been conducted by Finance Ministers separately from those on political union, as my right hon. Friends the Members for Blaby and for Chingford said, nobody can be in any doubt that monetary union, if it happens, is a process with potentially profound political implications.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made the case for a single currency, which he said could be seen as a logical extension of the single market. He referred to the reduction in transaction costs and exchange rate risks that could increase trade and investment, and promote investment from outside into the Community. Above all, some see it as achieving price stability—not only a single currency zone, but a low-inflation zone. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said, many in industry and the City fear the commercial consequences if Britain were to exclude itself from any future European currency union.

For those reasons, we think that it would have been wrong to stand aside or walk away from the negotiations, but the important potential economic arguments must be balanced against the political consequences and the practicalities. One thing is certain: any attempt to create a single currency in Europe must be based on the prior convergence, not just of inflation and interest rates, but market flexibility throughout the economies of the member states. Without that, there would be enormous and permanent regional imbalances which would have disastrous consequences.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The House will have noticed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has widened the issue of convergence from the definition given by the Foreign Secretary this afternoon. We now have a better idea about convergence than we did this afternoon. May we have an answer from the Chancellor to the question raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) about the hard ecu?

Mr. Lamont: I shall answer that precise question now if the hon. Gentleman wants. He is wrong—the hard ecu was discussed recently. Incorporating many of the features of the hard ecu, using a common currency to promote convergence and having something similar to the monetary fund that we proposed earlier are all ideas which are still on the table. Other countries wish to see a hardening of the ecu in stage 2. The basic framework of our proposal still applies.

There are few recent examples of countries coming together to form a currency union of independent sovereign states. For that reason, it would be something of a step into the unknown. However we expect the Community to develop, events will no doubt turn out

[Mr. Lamont]

differently. As many of my hon. Friends have said, notably my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, over the next few years the current Community could be enlarged into one of perhaps 15 or 20 countries. A single currency would have to be able to accommodate that change, as would the institutions of the Community.

Mr. Marlow *rose——*

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) *rose——*

Mr. Lamont: Several hon. Members have asked questions that I want to answer, because it is important to get the answers on the record. I shall give way soon.

For the reasons that I have given, I believe that my right hon. Friends the Members for Worcester (Mr. Walker), for Blaby, and for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) were right to pose the question: is it possible to have a monetary union without also having a political union? They are right to ask whether it is possible to reconcile a single currency with national Governments who keep control of economic policy and maintain the freedom to tax and spend. Those are important questions.

They also raised the issue whether there should be constraints on Government's fiscal policies and freedoms, and if so how far they should go. It was due to the huge issues involved that we have made it clear that we cannot make the commitment to move to a single currency without a separate decision at the appropriate time taken by Government and Parliament. We cannot, and we shall not.

Some of my hon. Friends asked whether the text as it presently stands genuinely enables us to avoid the commitment to move to a single currency. On the basis of all the advice available to me, I can give the House that assurance. My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley referred to the European Court of Justice. The advice that I have had is quite clear. There can be no question of the United Kingdom being in breach of the treaty for refusing to move to a single currency.

Some of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), suggested that articles 2 and 3a of the draft treaty implied a commitment to move to a single currency. It is true that economic and monetary union is part of the Community task set out in article 2, as it was in the preamble to the Single European Act. However, as article 3a makes clear, nothing in these articles overrides the provisions for a form of exemption status which would be without time limit.

Of course we are not committed to one particular draft, and we will need to be absolutely satisfied that the final text is legally watertight. I assure the House that we shall reflect on the points that have been made in the debate and that the Government will settle for nothing less than a treaty that leaves us wholly free to decide whether or not to move to a single currency. "Wholly free" means free to make whatever choice we wish.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Government sign a treaty which includes an absurd protocol limiting the rate of public expenditure to 3 per cent. of deficit and a central bank whose undemocratic status would not allow any Government to influence its decisions?

Mr. Lamont: I am coming to those precise points.

Mr. Rowlands: Answer.

Mr. Lamont: I intend to answer. One of the hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friends delivered a lesson on manners, but obviously the hon. Gentleman did not hear it.

Some hon. Members have said that, if we sign a treaty that provides for a single currency, then, even if we are not legally committed to move to a single currency, the pressures to adopt it will be there, and a single currency will become inevitable. I say to my hon. Friends who advanced that argument that it shows a lack of confidence in their case. If a single currency cannot work, or cannot be made to work without unacceptable infringement of sovereignty, it will deservedly be rejected by the House.

Because we are not prepared to make a commitment to move to a single currency, monetary, fiscal and economic policy in general will remain firmly in national hands until and unless the decision is made to move to a single currency and to stage 3. This is an extremely important point. It has been my intention throughout to negotiate a treaty which, up to the point of decision, leaves the Government free to continue to run our own economic policy.

For example, in stage 2, monetary policy will remain firmly in national hands. The new European Monetary Institute will have co-ordinating tasks in the same way as the present Committee of Central Bank Governors has. It will oversee the development of the ecu, and the EMI will carry out work in preparation for a possible future move to stage 3.

The EMI will not be a European central bank. It will not take away the freedom of member states to conduct their own monetary policies. A European central bank will not be set up unless and until the Community decides to move to stage 3. Hon. Members may have noticed that, although a country must be a member of the ERM to move to stage 3, ERM membership is not a treaty obligation in stage 2. Monetary policy remains with member states unless and until they choose to participate in the single currency area. The same is true of fiscal policy.

In stage 2 of the Economic and Finance Council would be able to examine a member state's economic or fiscal policies and to make recommendations, but ECOFIN is already empowered to do exactly that. Other organisations such as the IMF and OECD are already engaged in and entitled to do this. The proposed procedure in stage 2 will be more formalised but contains little new. Council action in stage 2 would take the form of recommendations, which are clearly stated in article 189 to have no binding force.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing spoke about the general provision that member states

"shall avoid excessive budget deficits"

in stage 2, although he recognised that the draft treaty makes it clear that such an obligation would not be enforceable by infraction proceedings. The Government have pursued, and will continue to pursue, sound fiscal policies, and we think that other member states should do likewise. We are not prepared to accept any binding obligation in this area, and it is my firm objective to amend this provision so that it does not create any such obligation in stage two.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lamont: I will give way if my hon. Friend insists, but there are many important points to be made about the

negotiations, and we shall not have them on the record and the House will not know about them if I am not allowed enough time to set them out.

In stage 3, matters would be very different. A European central bank would have been brought into existence, which would have sole responsibility for monetary policy in those member states that chose to move to a single currency. A number of right hon. and hon. Members—for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford—have pointed out that the European central bank would operate independently of political control. However, it would be accountable for its actions to the Council of Economic Finance Ministers and the President of that Council would be able to attend meetings of the governing board.

The Council would also have an important role in formulating exchange rate policy. The Governor of the Bank of England would be a member of the governing board of the European central bank and would continue to be appointed at a national level, but the European central bank in stage 3 would have to be free to set interest rates without interference. That is the view of every member state. In a Community of 12 countries, it simply would not be practical for 12 Finance Ministers to intervene in the monetary policy decisions of the central bank.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spoke about the binding rules. A number of my right hon. and hon. Friends have noted that the current draft of the treaty also provides for binding rules of fiscal deficits in stage 3. This has been the subject of considerable argument in the debate. There are those who have argued that, if monetary policy is set by the centre, fiscal policy must inevitably be centrally determined; otherwise, there is a risk of monetary financing or inflation. Also, there would be the risk of excessive budget deficits in one country, which would push up interest rates throughout the single currency area.

In my view, the rigid central determination of fiscal policy is neither necessary nor desirable. Even if there were to be one European currency and one European monetary policy, it is our intention that there should still be 12 fiscal policies and 12 Finance Ministers. The Government believe that, even in stage 3, Community action to restrict deficits would be necessary only in the rare cases where it was clear that the deficit was grossly excessive—for example, if it threatened monetary stability throughout the Community.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney spoke about the 3 per cent. of GDP trigger, a point raised also by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and other hon. Members. The present proposals would entail Council examination of the policies of member states with deficits exceeding 3 per cent. of GDP, but such deficits would not be prohibited. The 3 per cent. criterion would trigger investigation and would lead to further action only if the Council, taking the relevant economic circumstances into account, so decided.

I agree with what has been said on this subject: that the proposals in the treaty are too onerous. We shall be working to ensure that the procedure catches only deficits that are clearly excessive and unsustainable. We shall try to secure in the negotiations rules that ensure that limitations on deficits operate with the lightest possible touch.

Mr. Marlow: We have in a few minutes an important vote coming up, and I am sure that hon. Members will want to get the matter right. Among the 32 lines of gobbledegook that pass for an Opposition amendment, the Government are urged

"to achieve . . . a single currency as the essential foundation".

Conservative or Labour Members who vote for the amendment will want to know whether this is committing the Opposition to a single currency, come what may, willy-nilly.

Mr. Lamont: I am just as mystified by the Opposition's amendment as my hon. Friend. It will not surprise him to know that I am about to come to that precise point.

The speeches made by the Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East were not up to the seriousness and the gravity of the issues that we have discussed tonight. Our approach to the negotiations has been constructive but cautious: cautious to ensure that British Governments retain the freedom to act in the national interest, but constructive in preparing Community arrangements which are practical and which, if they come into being, will work.

That is the approach of a responsible Government, a Government who seek agreement with their partners but are prepared to say no if the nation's interests are under threat. It is an approach which is in the starkest possible contrast to the Opposition's attitude. There can be no more serious topic than that which we are discussing tonight, but the Opposition have in no way addressed themselves to the issues.

The Leader of the Opposition spent the 1970s saying that membership of the Community was, to use his words, "an absolutely crazy mistake". He spent much of the 1980s demanding outright and immediate withdrawal, but now he proposes to spend the 1990s apparently willing to sign every piece of paper which floats across the English channel.

Having once believed that the Community was entirely bad, the Leader of the Opposition now apparently believes that everything that emanates from Brussels, everything that is proposed there, is unquestionably good. He and his colleagues are prepared and ready to sign away the rights of this Parliament to decide our own social and employment laws. They propose regional policies which would, like so many of their ideas, cost the British taxpayer dear. They are ready to commit Britain to move to a single currency without any further deliberation or decision and without the slightest regard to the economic consequences.

A year ago, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said that it would not be prudent to commit ourselves to a single currency, but on Tuesday he issued a brief statement saying that the Labour party has made it clear that in principle it favours progress towards a single currency. Yesterday, the House heard me ask the Leader of the Opposition whether at Maastricht he would be prepared to make an irrevocable commitment to move to a single currency. I asked him whether he would sign not just the treaty but the declaration to move to a single currency. Various of my hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby, also asked the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, but we have had no answer whatever.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he would not be looking for an opt-out clause. That surely means that the Opposition are committed to move to a single currency.

[Mr. Lamont]

That is what I would have thought. It is extraordinary that the right hon. Gentleman should say that he is not interested in that opt-out clause. It is there because we worked hard for it and we have negotiated for it. The right hon. Gentleman is saying that he does not want to take advantage of it. He is prepared to chuck away Britain's interests. Irrespective of having the opportunity, he would commit Britain to move to a single currency.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said that the decision does not really arise until 1997, but the declaration which every other country is prepared to sign arises this year, at this moment. Would the Leader of the Opposition sign it? We have had no answer on that point.

It is crystal clear that the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to commit Britain to move irrevocably to a single currency. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn after the speeches that we have heard in the past few days.

The Government have been involved in long and complex negotiations. They have been fighting for vital British interests—the power of the House, the right of Government to take their own taxation and spending decisions, the right of Government to run their own immigration policy. Those on the Opposition Front Bench are prepared to throw that away. The Opposition have allowed themselves to become federalists in all but name. We reject their approach, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Government's policy in the Lobby.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 391.

Division No.14] **[10.00**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hume, John
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Killoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.

Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Nicol
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

10.14 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of this Session we passed a Sessional Order to enable the byways to be kept clear for hon. Members to get to this House. Clearly something has gone wrong. Where are the other 29 Labour Members of Parliament? Where have they gone?

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 250.

Division No. 15] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mallow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin

Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wiltshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leetor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce

Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, believing it is in Britain's interests to continue to be at the heart of the European Community and able to shape its future and that of Europe as a whole, endorses the constructive negotiating approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government in the Inter-Governmental Conferences on Economic and Monetary Union and on Political Union; and urges them to work for an agreement at the forthcoming European Council at Maastricht which avoids the development of a federal Europe, enables this country to exert the greatest influence on the economic evolution of the Community while preserving the right of Parliament to decide at a future date whether to adopt a single currency, on issues of Community competence concentrates the development of action on those issues which cannot be handled more effectively at national level and, in particular, avoids intrusive Community measures in social areas which are matters for national decision, devlops a European security policy compatible with NATO and co-operation in foreign policy which safeguards this country's national interests, increases the accountability of the Commission, enhances the rule of law in the Community including improved implementation, enforcement and compliance with Community legislation, improves co-operation between European governments in the fight against drugs, terrorism and cross-border crime, and through these policies secures the long-term interests of the United Kingdom.

Accommodation and Works

Ordered,

That Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Geraint Howells, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. David Lightbown, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Ray Powell and Mr. Donald Thompson be members of the Accommodation and Works Committee.

Administration

Ordered,

That Mr. Jacques Arnold, Sir Charles Irving, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Stanley Orme, Mrs. Marion Roe, Mr. William Ross and Mr. Tom Sackville be members of the Administration Committee.

Catering

Ordered,

That Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. Anthony Steen and Mr. John Townend be members of the Catering Committee.

Information

Ordered,

That Mr. Spencer Batiste, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Huw Edwards, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. John McFall, Sir Fergus Montgomery and Mr. Gary Waller be members of the Information Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Adult Education (Croydon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.29 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the question of adult education in Croydon, and to see you, Mr. Speaker, in the Chair, because you and I are privileged to represent constituencies in Croydon. It is an area of great variety. It is renowned as a business and commercial centre. In Croydon, a large number of people from different ethnic backgrounds live and work happily side by side. In many ways, it is a thriving area, although it is not without its pockets of deprivation. It is certainly an area where a variety of different needs and different expectations exist.

For many years, we have been fortunate in the excellence of the Croydon borough council, and nowhere is this more true than in its education department. In my time, I have known two outstanding directors of education, Donald Naismith and Paul Benians; and two very fine chairmen of education, Councillor Derek Loughborough and Councillor Andrew Pelling. Members of the education department and councillors alike have constantly striven to provide a high standard of education for as rich and diverse a society as one can imagine.

Nowhere is this more true than in adult education. In Croydon, the continuing education and training service is a free-standing adult education service, with a history of providing an important access point for those with needs for basic skills. It provides English for speakers of other languages, training for employment, accreditation and qualifications, as well as many opportunities for those who wish to follow a variety of general adult education courses. The large programme is planned on a borough-wide basis, and delivered locally in 11 centres. Three of these are full time, day and evening, and are used exclusively by adults: Coombe Cliff, South Norwood—in your constituency, Mr. Speaker—and Smitham.

Last year, there were some 42,000 enrolements, representing 28,000 individual students. Some 60 per cent. of enrolments are for vocational courses and 40 per cent. are for leisure courses.

I know that you, Mr. Speaker, recently visited the South Norwood centre, and that you were mightily impressed by everything that you saw. I, too, was privileged to visit that centre and the one at Coombe Cliff, in the company of Margaret Davey, the head of continuing education and training service, and of Barbara Holland, who looks after South Norwood.

What we both saw was impressive: adults of all ages atending a wide variety of courses. Keep fit was taking place alongside book-keeping; languages and embroidery were next to jobsearch; cookery and pottery were adjoining computer studies; upholstery was alongside management training and business start-up. The atmosphere was friendly. It was informal and, above all, accessible—evidence, no doubt, of the absence of entry requirements and the availability of fee concessions for those most in need. In the centres, the general public as well as students are made to feel welcome, and the atmosphere is overwhelmingly adult. I can well understand that many older and less confident people feel comfortable and unthreatened in such places.

Such a service is unique in the way in which it works through and with other partners, in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Voluntary organisations have a key role in the total range of provision for adults and are strongly supported in Croydon. Three examples are the university of the third age, the south London refugee project, and the Croydon action group for the unemployed, where aspects of specialist work are undertaken, with the support of the adult service.

Croydon's free-standing and continuing education and training service is cost-effective, vigorous and efficient. The net cost per student hour is about half what it is in the local colleges. It has a distinctive role in Croydon, quite separate from the large further and higher education college and yet there is still considerable collaboration with many joint projects and attention to progress routes into further education and beyond.

I have a concern—the Government have sought to divide courses at centres into vocational on the one hand and leisure on the other. The implication is that responsibility for running vocational courses will rest with colleges, who will themselves apply to the funding council for money to run such vocational courses. So-called leisure courses will be left with the local authority in the adult education centres.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): As chairman of the all-party adult education committee, I congratulate my hon. Friend on this most important debate. Does he agree that there is another worry about separating vocational from non-vocational adult education? If one separates them, it may be assumed that vocational courses are more valid than non-vocational, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Malins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, because his expertise on this subject is well known, as is his general understanding of the problems involved. I hope to touch on the subject that he mentioned shortly.

In Croydon dividing courses could have a number of damaging effects. Great damage could be caused to the prospects of the adult education centres, where currently vocational and so-called leisure courses exist happily side by side. The centres might have to go cap in hand to the Croydon college and the two sixth-form colleges in the borough asking their governing bodies to apply to the funding council for funds for vocational courses, in the hope that funds would be obtained on behalf of the adult education centres. A large part of their excellent work might disappear.

There is a strong link between so-called vocational and so-called leisure courses. The person, for example, who is nervous or diffident or who has, or might have, unhappy memories of school, may initially have the courage to join a pottery or dancing class. Having plucked up the courage, he or she will find perhaps in the next room a course in Spanish or computer studies. He or she may well progress from one to the other. Surely that is to the general good.

The Bengali lady who enrolled in an English cookery class, so that she could provide English food for some of her son's chums at school, is likely next to take a GCSE in English and help prepare herself for a job that may be just around the corner. The hesitant middle-aged gentleman who was brave enough to join a keep fit class later found himself confident enough to join the neighbouring

[Mr. Malins]

management training and business start-up class, and grew in confidence and ability to the extent that he opened up a new business. Such is the inextricable link and the social cohesion brought about by a variety of classes under the same roof.

My concern is that the criteria for college eligible for funding, through the new funding council, will exclude a clearly successful service and a supportive authority such as that found in Croydon. The result could surely be a damaging split between the different types of courses, with responsibility for the eligible areas potentially fragmented between the further education college, sixth form colleges and the remainder. The so-called leisure and recreation programmes would be the responsibility of the local authority and might become too small to be financially, organisationally or educationally viable.

If they went, what a loss it would be. Is there not a strong argument for the free-standing services such as Croydon's continuing education and training service to be able to bid direct to the funding council rather than through the new sector colleges?

Another concern relates to premises. The three buildings in Croydon which are exclusively dedicated to the education of adults are intensively used as an important access point for people following general non-vocational, basic skills, accredited and work training programmes. They are used to capacity—daily, at weekends and holidays—and they are a valuable resource used by the voluntary sector. If the new sector colleges were able to apply for the use of those premises it could jeopardise the adult ethos and character of the provision and would subsequently deny many adults their first step back into education.

I am not exaggerating when I say that I was inspired by all I saw at the adult education centres in Croydon. I dare say that you too, Mr. Speaker, were inspired by all you saw, and of course you have visited them all over the years and have great experience of this subject.

For that reason, I am desperately concerned for their long-term well being, and I know that that sentiment is shared by you, Mr. Speaker, and by many thousands in Croydon, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir. W. Clark) who I am delighted to see in his place for this debate—I welcome his support—and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore).

I cannot end this short debate without paying tribute to the Government, who have without doubt recognised that adult education is vital—that adults are an important client group who have education and training needs well worthy of Government interest and support. That is well recognised by the Government, to whom much credit is due.

10.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I am grateful, as is the House, to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) for providing us with this opportunity to consider education for adults in Croydon.

The House always appreciates the close interest which you, Mr. Speaker, take in Adjournment debates initiated by hon. Members on the Back Benches, but you will have an even greater personal interest than usual in this debate. Croydon is indeed a borough fortunate in its parliamentary representation. We also have present my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), so there is powerful representation in the House tonight in the interests of adult education in Croydon.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West for two reasons. First, I am pleased that by means of this debate, we are able to look closely at one particular education service for adults. Secondly, I am glad to have the opportunity of relating the framework of our Further and Higher Education Bill, which has today been debated in another place, to the education for adults as it take place on the ground. The importance that we attach to the further education of adults will be clearly demonstrated through this debate.

My hon. Friend has vividly described the features of the Croydon education and training service, which is one of the largest services for adults in the London area. It has an impressive enrolment count and a strong place in the local community. It establishes this place through a dispersed service which is accessible to the community at large, using a mix of dedicated facilities and the premises of schools and colleges.

My hon. Friend demonstrated his close knowledge of the service in Croydon and made clear his commitment, and that of his hon. and right hon. Friends who represent Croydon constituencies, to the provision of a diverse and consistently high-quality service.

Much of the provision in Croydon falls within those areas of priority which the Government have identified in the legislation—that is, courses leading to qualifications, basic skills courses, courses in English as a second language and access courses. The community is served in the widest sense through an open access policy which welcomes adults at whatever educational stage they have reached. It is also served by the good links which the service has established with the local training and enterprise council and with industry. I welcome the partnership it has established with voluntary organisations.

Those are considerable strengths. Our policy on the further education of adults will pose no threat to them. Indeed, it will enable the Croydon education and training service, along with all others, to preserve the characteristics of their provision, including their community role, and to build on their strengths.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his recognition of our firm commitment to the further education of adults. As he will know, our reforms for further education as a whole are designed to provide enhanced opportunities for both young people and adults and to provide a further stimulus to increased participation. We have provided for the transfer of further education and sixth form colleges to a new sector, which will be funded directly by new further education funding councils in England and Wales. We believe that the new funding regime will give colleges an even greater incentive to recruit additional students and to expand participation accordingly. For students—young people and adults alike—it will mean more opportunities to gain new skills, obtain qualifications and develop fully the roles that they need to fulfil themselves at work and as citizens.

Our proposals, as set out in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", have been

generally welcomed. But my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I were aware of some uncertainty about the place of adults within the new policy framework and the arrangements that would apply to them. We clarified a number of points before the legislation was introduced. The Bill addresses other concerns in a way that serves to underline our firm commitment to all kinds of further education for adults.

Few of the provisions of the Bill belong uniquely to the 16-19 age group, but some have a very special application to the provision of further education for adults. I shall describe those provisions and how they will work for the adult sector at large, including the Croydon education and training service.

The Bill provides a clear duty for the provision of all kinds of further education for adults. The whole scope of the present duty set out in the Education Act 1944 as amended is retained. We intend that, in future, it should be divided between the funding councils and LEAs. Within their respective duties, the councils and LEAs will each be required to take account of students with special educational needs.

The funding councils' duty will embrace courses leading to academic and vocational qualifications; access to higher education courses; courses that provide access to qualification-bearing courses and higher education courses; basic skills courses; courses in English for speakers of other languages and, in Wales, courses leading to proficiency in Welsh. Those are the Government's priorities. They will be secured by the funding councils working through the colleges within the new sector. They cover courses which the Government believe should be secured at national level because of their national significance.

The second strand of the duty to provide further education for adults falls to the local education authorities. Their duty covers all kinds of further education for adults that do not come within the scope of the funding councils' duty. By contrast with the duty placed upon the councils, the LEAs' duty can be characterised as being generally of a more local nature and best catered for locally. It is a duty that goes very wide. It covers the provision of courses that meet the leisure interests of adults, but also many other important interests.

Courses coming within the remit of the LEAs' duty can help people progress to more advanced courses—my hon. Friend made that important point—help them in their jobs and prepare them for various roles, such as good parenthood, or for responsible functions within the wider community. They can make a significant contribution to the general health and well-being of individuals and local communities.

The whole scope of the duty to secure provision for adults as it will be divided between the funding councils and LEAs will continue to be supported from public funds. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science made clear on 24 September that, in calculating the transfer of funds from local authorities to the funding councils in recognition of their new responsibilities, the resources attributable to those courses for which the LEAs will continue to be responsible will be left within local authorities' standard spending assessments. That means that there will be no question of our reforms causing fees to rise. LEAs will continue to be able, as now, to respond flexibly to local demand and to the needs and circumstances of their local communities, taking account of the ability of students to pay fees.

My hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, North-West and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) have referred to a vocational/non-vocational divide within our proposals. I hope I can reassure my hon. Friends that the framework of duties within the Bill does not create such a divide. The provision for which the funding councils will be responsible goes well beyond the purely vocational. Similarly, the duty upon LEAs can lead to provision which serves ends useful to the individual within his work, such as foreign language classes. The arguments which have been advanced that our proposals create a distinction between two types of provision is not borne out either in terms of the legislation or in practical terms.

It is important to underline the role of access and progression within the proposed framework. My hon. Friend has mentioned the strong link between provision which falls respectively to the duties of funding councils and LEAs. We attach great importance to widening access as is evident from the Bill. Certain kinds of access have been given priority and fall to the duty of the funding councils, but progression routes from LEA sector provision to more formal qualification-bearing courses are also important.

The division of duties between the councils and LEA will not stand in the way of adults wishing to progress from informal study to courses leading to qualifications. Adults now study on all kinds of courses in a variety of institutions—further education colleges and adult education centres and colleges. They will continue to be able to enrol on courses in their local institutions, as they do at present, and to progress to more advanced provision. That might be within the same institution or elsewhere, depending upon the pattern of provision locally. Therefore, adults in Croydon will continue to be able to take full advantage of the access and progression routes provided by the Croydon education and training service.

My hon. Friend raised two particular concerns. The first was about the funding relationship between the Croydon education and training service and colleges in the new further education sector in respect of the provision made by the service which falls to the duty of the funding council. We want to see all resources available for adults used properly—whether they are in further education colleges or in adult education colleges and centres run by LEAs. It follows therefore that we will expect further education colleges in the new sector to support provision which falls within the funding councils remit where this is made in adult education colleges and centres.

We have considered carefully how our legislation will help to achieve that end. We propose that the governing body of an institution outside the funding council sector will be able to make to an institution within that sector a request that it should apply to the council for support on the external institutions behalf. The funding council sector institution will forward the application to the funding council if facilities for the kind of courses in question are not adequate in the locality. If the further education college does not forward the application, its decision will be subject to review by the Secretary of State on the grounds of unreasonableness or failure to perform a duty.

The councils have a duty to secure facilities which are in such places, of such character and so equipped as to meet reasonable need. In addition, the regional advisory

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

committees will have an important role in advising the funding council for England on significant local issues. Their role will be to see that local people are properly served. I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friends and you, Mr. Speaker, on that point.

Those are substantial safeguards. They mean that the Croydon education and training service will continue to be able to make provision which falls to the duty of the funding council and to receive council funding via the local further education college or colleges for the purpose. I note that the Croydon service has good collaborative links with Croydon further education college. These links, together with the safeguards within the legislation, will provide a firm basis for continuing collaboration in the interests of adult students.

My hon. Friend asks whether the Croydon education and training service might be able to bid directly to the funding council. We think that our Bill has taken account of concerns of adult education colleges and services, such as Croydon, about funding for the range of provision they make. However, we recognise that some institutions may be interested in exploring the possibility of incorporation within the new further education sector by reason of the balance of provision they make. That is not ruled out.

The Government had to set criteria in the Bill for the automatic transfer of further education colleges to the new sector, but the White Paper made it clear that the funding councils could propose that other institutions which fell outside the criteria might be included in the new arrangements. The Bill provides for this. Institutions which want to take forward the possibility of incorporation should make application to the funding councils. We propose to ask the funding councils to deal with such applications as one of their first tasks.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I fully support what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) has said, and I am delighted that the Minister supports funding. There is a problem about adult education in Croydon, but many other constituencies must suffer from the same problem. Does the Minister think it extraordinary that no Opposition Members are present for this important debate?

Mr. Howarth: My right hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. Some Opposition complaints about our policies have been factitious. Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West, we have an opportunity to debate an immensely important issue about which there is great interest in the country. It is extraordinary that the Opposition Benches are empty and that neither Labour Members nor Liberal Democrats have bothered to attend the debate. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for drawing the matter to our attention.

It is important that each institution considers very carefully whether such an application for incorporation would be appropriate in its case. LEAs have important duties to fulfil through these institutions and will continue to receive public funds in support of these duties. Under the Bill, they will also be able to give recognition to the status of their institutions by establishing governing bodies and by delegating functions to them. The best place for some institutions may indeed be within the funding council sector, but for others it may be within the local education authority.

The second concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West is about the future of those premises of the Croydon service which are dedicated to the further education of adults. Let me put his mind at rest. A further education college can apply for an order to gain the use of local education authority premises after April 1993 only in tightly defined circumstances. First, the premises in question must have been used for further education purposes and have been, or be about to be, taken out of use for that purpose. Secondly, the further education college must have been unable to secure use of the premises by agreement with the local education authority. Our intention is to secure that facilities used for further education continue to remain available to the local community for further education purposes, where the college governors consider it important in order to carry out their responsibilities. This provision poses no threat to the Croydon service's premises.

We have had a useful debate. The aim of our policy is to develop a better education system which will provide a wide range of important opportunities for adults in the interests of meeting the needs of the nation and of individual citizens. The Government are deeply committed to adult education. I am confident that our Bill will achieve its aims and that it will serve well the Croydon education and training service and the citizens of Croydon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 November 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Nuclear Defence

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

9.34 am

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): I welcome this opportunity to discuss nuclear defence at a time of tremendous change in the world, when the end of the cold war has come and with it the end of the nuclear stalemate and confrontation that have marked the past 45 years. The background to today's debate is the progressive assessment that the Government have been making of defence policy, in which we have taken decisions on our new strategy and structure across a wide range of defence issues.

On 25 July last year I set out our "Options for Change", the broad proposals for a new structure of our armed forces and defences. As soon as the Gulf war had ended, we proceeded actively with our NATO allies to determine the future NATO strategy and structure, out of which emerged the important role for the United Kingdom of the leadership of and significant contribution to the rapid reaction corps. That was announced on 25 May this year.

On 4 June I was able to confirm the future size of the British Army. On 10 July we published the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" and the 1991 White Paper, "Britain's Defence for the 90s". On 23 July we published "Britain's Army for the 90s".

In these ways we set out clearly for the country the future strategy and structure of our defences. That is in line with our duty to our country and to our allies and service men, so that they know where they stand. We particularly dealt with the conventional forces, but this morning is an opportunity to deal with the nuclear aspects of our defences. It is entirely appropriate that we should set out the Government's view on what future strategy should be.

This morning is also a chance, which I am sure will be welcomed, for hon. Members of other parties to set out their policies on these important matters. They should be clearly set out for the country and for the services, who are keenly interested, with an election not many months away, to know what they are. Every party has a duty clearly to set out where it stands on these issues. The House looks forward with interest to hearing hon. Members from other parties.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Secretary of State will be well aware that at the end of questions on the Prime Minister's statement reporting on the NATO summit he talked about the modernisation of Polaris. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us a little information about that, because it certainly surprised most hon. Members that day? Most of us were puzzled about what he might have been referring to.

Mr. King: I shall be talking about our modernisation programme in some detail and I shall certainly refer to what emerged from the NATO summit.

We have reached agreements on conventional forces. The START agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union has moved further with an agreement to a reduction of one third in the strategic missile arsenals of the two super-powers.

It is worth reminding the House that those negotiations involved 10 years of hard, laborious work. At times, it seemed that no progress would be made, but they have resulted in a one third reduction in the strategic nuclear arsenals.

Given the recent changes in the world, we have seen even more dramatic developments. Significant decisions have been made to reduce the nuclear arsenal and further proposals are imminent. I know that the House will welcome that. On 27 September, President Bush and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the latest western initiative that proposes the total elimination of nuclear artillery shells and short-range ballistic warheads. They also proposed major changes in the strategic nuclear arsenal that go way beyond what was achieved by the 10 years of laborious work in the START negotiations. I am sure that the House welcomes the positive response from President Gorbachev, who also proposed significant changes. All that is encouraging.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman concede that the announcements made by President Bush in September and October were equivalent to a unilateral declaration of a reduction in strategic arms? That met with an immediate response from the Soviet Union, which has made an equal reduction in its strategic arms.

Mr. King: I did not hear the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question; will he repeat it please?

Mr. Corbyn: At the end of September, President Bush announced what was, in effect, a unilateral reduction in strategic arms, which received an equal response from the Soviet Union some days later.

Mr. King: The announcement from President Bush meant that there would be a standing down from the alert state and certain changes in the carrying of maritime tactical nuclear weapons. The other measures he proposed were bilateral and President Gorbachev also proposed bilateral measures, dependent upon a response from the other side.

Encouraging progress has been made, but we are now faced with a different, serious problem—the virtual end of the Soviet Union and its centralised power as we have understood it. The Soviet Union, whatever the structure and the position in the individual republics, still has armed forces of 3 million and a nuclear arsenal of 27,000 weapons. The control exercised over that great arsenal is of immediate concern. It is a matter of great concern to President Bush and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who, as chairman of the G7, visited Moscow and put pressure on President Gorbachev and President Yeltsin. That concern was also reflected in the NATO summit communiqué of 8 November, which stated:

"We therefore welcome the intention of the Soviet leadership to ensure the safe, responsible and reliable control of these weapons under a single authority."

[Mr. King]

That communiqué addressed a particular problem—the difficulty of maintaining that central control by a single authority when power is moving increasingly to the republics.

It is interesting to note the location of the strategic ballistic missile warheads. The territories that now have the largest number of strategic ballistic missile warheads are as follows: the United States has the largest amount, Russia comes second, the Ukraine comes third, Kazakhstan comes fourth, France comes fifth, the United Kingdom comes sixth, Byelorussia comes seventh and China, eighth. I set out the information in that manner because it is not equivalent to casual geographic facts any more; that information is of potential political significance in the future.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Secretary of State has rightly drawn attention to the decentralised location of the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles. What does he know about the continued centralised control of the permissible action link for those particular weapons? That is of vital importance to any discussions that take place.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise that important question and I shall refer to it later.

The present situation is extremely confused. In a recent interview reported in *Der Spiegel*, President Yeltsin emphasised the direction in which the republics have moved. He said:

"We have nothing against Russia and the Union exercising control jointly . . . a new control mechanism should be created which will not permit anybody to press the button alone."

The situation is equally confused in the Ukraine. For some time that republic has sought to establish itself as a nuclear-free zone. When the nuclear weapons were the property of the Soviet Union, the republic wanted to get rid of them. However, the Ukraine is not nearly so enthusiastic now about any early transfer of weapons to Russia, its neighbouring republic. It is much more concerned that there should be bilateral or multilateral inter-republic destruction of the nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union.

Against that confused background, we have been extremely anxious to seek to establish that the control systems have adequate and proper safeguards. That is of particular importance at a time of great political instability. The Soviet authorities have made available to us a great deal of information and advice on the technical nature of their systems and the way in which they are controlled. We are considerably reassured by the good technical control systems that exist and the protections built into them. I cannot go into detail on the point raised by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), but I can assure him that we have considered that matter closely. We have sought information about control of the codes and an assurance that they cannot be operated through unilateral action, but that it would require an interlock capability which is in a number of different hands.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): How reassured or worried is the Secretary of State by the attitude of the president of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nazarbayev, who has made it clear that he will not give up the 100 SS18 weapons on his soil and that he will use them as a bargaining chip with Moscow to achieve full independence? Surely none of us can find that reassuring. Most of us find it deeply alarming.

Mr. King: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is correct in his assessment. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has had recent discussions with President Nazarbayev, who said that he did not want those weapons retained on his soil. However, this is a fast-moving and confused situation, for the very reasons that I have given. That confusion is typified by the situation in the Ukraine. When it sought independence it also sought to see itself as a nuclear-free zone. However, in the temporary confused situation, that republic now understands that things are not quite the same. It wants the elimination of nuclear weapons, but it does not want that to serve to its disadvantage against a neighbouring republic. One must keep a close eye on developments.

It is important to determine the quality of the physical safeguards of the nuclear stores. There is no question but that they are impressive in terms of anti-intruder devices, the fencing, their location and physical guarding. In the final analysis, the quality of that protection is dependent upon the loyalty, responsibility and commitment of those guarding those stores. Elite forces have that job in the Soviet Union, but what will happen if they are not fed or paid and are seemingly abandoned by their authority? That has not happened, but it is a risk. The breakdown of central authority will pose some major problems and we are right to be properly concerned about that issue. We will have to remain concerned—the House will understand that—for some considerable time.

The quantities involved are vast, and the problems of making safe or destroying such a huge arsenal will take time to overcome. That is part of the background against which we assess the current situation and review our own nuclear strategy.

The second important aspect was recently highlighted by the conflict with Iraq. I refer to the dangers posed by nuclear proliferation elsewhere in the world. We know of 15 countries that now have a ballistic missile capability, and believe that the figure will soon rise to 20, including Pakistan, India, Libya, Iraq and Iran. Developments in Iraq gave a clear warning that a number of countries have nuclear programmes that could have military potential.

We know from investigations being undertaken at this very minute in Iraq under United Nations authority—in which British personnel are involved in identifying and discovering every aspect of that country's nuclear, chemical and biological programme—that Saddam Hussein was on the way to developing a nuclear explosive device, albeit it crude, by 1993.

Mr. Flynn: Did the Secretary of State say that the Government know of 20 countries that have ballistic missiles? Yesterday, in replying to my question asking for details of all the countries possessing ballistic missiles, the right hon. Gentleman listed 30.

Mr. King: I am always conservative in the figures that I give the House. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for emphasising my point that nuclear capability is spreading widely, and behind it is the sinister development of increasing covert nuclear programmes with military potential.

That is the background against which defence planners must work. We must consider capability and intentions. It is clear that whatever may be the Soviet Union's intentions, it will retain a massive nuclear capability that will require stringent security, and which could remain a threat for many years. I emphasise again the risk that confronts us in terms of the scale of that capability and the time needed to deal with it.

In our assessments for the future, another serious threat that we take into account are the atomic cities within the Soviet Union—about which some right hon. and hon. Members may have read newspaper reports—where there have been concentrations of scientists working on different programmes. There are also armament cities. They were a feature of the Soviet Union's structure of centralised authority, having been established in somewhat isolated locations, enclosed and protected from the surrounding community.

Because those cities come under the direct authority and responsibility of Soviet ministries that have been or are being abolished, they may soon lack the resources that they need—so there is concern about the future destination of personnel whose particular skills and capabilities might be very much in demand in other parts of the world.

I am putting before the House an honest assessment of the risks that we face and against which we must plan our strategy. The House will understand why I drew attention to that latter point.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): We all share the Secretary of State's concerns, because they relate to matters of fact, not opinion. However, in his reference to ballistics capability, the right hon. Gentleman was in danger of confusing the ability to deliver with the ability to manufacture a warhead that could be attached to a missile. The two are not necessarily the same.

Can the Secretary of State say how many of the countries concerned are capable of producing on their own account a complete ballistic missile system? If countries have to import components or adapt existing civilian technologies for that purpose, surely we must also seek to control technical co-operation and sales—an aspect about which, in the recent past, the Government were incredibly careless. In fact, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, in seeking in a previous incarnation to export or die, may have caused that option to be reversed.

Mr. King: That is quite wrong. The hon. Gentleman seeks to make a political and unfair point. He knows perfectly well that certain countries are prepared to sell missile technology, including the People's Republic of China and North Korea, which contributed significantly to Iraq's nuclear capabilities. We tend to find an interaction between imported technology and local development. Our investigators in Iraq were impressed by the calibre and quality of the domestic research and development capabilities developed under Saddam Hussein.

I set out as clearly as I could the background against which we must assess our new approach. We draw first on the agreements reached with our allies in NATO, which unveiled its new strategic concept at the Rome summit on 7 and 8 November. Its most important conclusion was:

"the Alliance will maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary, although at a significantly reduced level."

The allies clarified the make-up of the nuclear forces required:

"The supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; the independent nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Alliance."

The concept document added that the allies

"will provide an essential link with strategic nuclear forces, reinforcing the trans-Atlantic link."

Those three statements will remain the essential guiding principles of NATO and of our defence policies for the foreseeable future.

It is not that NATO, in making those statements, is standing still—far from it. At the meeting of the nuclear planning group in Taormina, which I attended last month, it was agreed that all ground-launched, sub-strategic systems will be eliminated. That means no more Lance-type systems or nuclear artillery. Air-delivered weapons will be greatly reduced and there will be an 80 per cent. total reduction in NATO's sub-strategic stockpile in Europe. If one takes into account the reductions of the past decade, at the end of that process—which we will complete as quickly as we can—we shall have one tenth of the nuclear weapons in our sub-strategic stockpile that we had 10 years ago, which is a significant development. I made it clear on behalf of the United Kingdom that, in normal circumstances, no weapons will be deployed on surface vessels. The United Kingdom will play its full part in effecting those changes.

What does all that mean for our deterrent forces? I make absolutely clear the Government's commitment to Trident as Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent force for the 1990s and beyond. I emphasise the words "and beyond." We are drawing towards the end of the Polaris programme, which began in the early 1960s, and which brought the first patrols in 1968. By the time that Polaris is phased out, it will have given some 30 years' service to our country.

The Trident programme is on course, and there have been significant reductions in costs since the original budgets were made. Nearly £2 billion has now been saved. The first Trident boat will be launched early next year and will be in service in the mid-1990s. A third Vanguard class boat was ordered last November; a tender for the fourth boat is currently being scrutinised and, subject to a successful analysis, we shall proceed with the project, thus ensuring that we can maintain and guarantee the effectiveness of our Trident nuclear deterrent.

Mr. O'Neill: May I return to the subject of the Prime Minister's statement about the modernisation of Polaris? Are we to take it that the Prime Minister was actually referring to the Trident programme, and that "Polaris" was merely a slip of the tongue?

Mr. King: I did not notice that. I expect that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will be pleased to clarify the matter.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the long-lead orders for the fourth submarine are already in place and that the initial work is already in progress?

Mr. King: I can confirm that, yes.

There have been questions about the number of submarines and the missile load that Trident should carry,

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and it has been suggested that we should reduce the programme. To reduce either the number of submarines or the missile load would be the silliest possible economy, for Trident would then no longer be an effective and credible deterrent.

The constant availability of the Trident nuclear deterrent must be guaranteed absolutely. There must always be one submarine on patrol: that must be the minimum requirement of our minimum nuclear deterrent. Trident must also be able to carry a missile load that is capable of matching modern defences and of threatening an aggressor with unacceptable damage. That is the key requirement; without such a capability, Trident cannot be a credible deterrent. Nothing would be more foolish and deceitful than to pretend, for the sake of political convenience, to possess a deterrent that had been so undermined and reduced that it did not actually work.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Before the Secretary of State works himself up to make an attack on the Labour party, will he clarify the question of the credible deterrent? If, to be "credible" in the next couple of years, Trident must have two and a half times the power of Polaris, the clear implication is that Polaris cannot itself be credible.

Mr. King: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who takes a close interest in the subject, is not well aware of the answer to his question. The reason is the progressive enhancement and the growing sophistication of defence systems. The assessments of which I speak are not changed two weeks later, and then revised again in a month's time. We must make our plans against an uncertain background; such plans cannot be implemented overnight, but must be introduced progressively and must then last for a long time. They must cover all eventualities for the next 30 years. That is what Polaris has done and we must ensure that it retains the capability to match possible future developments.

We shall be making a substantial reduction in the coming years, as part of the cut in NATO's air-delivered stockpile that I have already announced. However, we expect a small number of air-delivered weapons to continue to play an important deterrent role. I must emphasise the importance of the sub-strategic element. Trident, of course, is the ultimate guarantee of our security, but a sub-strategic option is also important.

I have already mentioned the risk of proliferation. An aggressor with a limited nuclear capability might think that he could get away with, possibly, the local use of nuclear weapons, without having to face the apparently unrealistic prospect of a total strategic nuclear reply. The sub-strategic option closes that loophole, depriving such aggressors of the opportunity to act on the belief that the United Kingdom will not respond and that, faced with nuclear escalation on such a scale, it no longer possesses a credible deterrent.

The French already have a stand-off missile. The Soviets have at least three and the Americans have a range of sub-strategic options, in particular air-launched and sea-based cruise missiles. As we reduce the number of weapons, we must consider their eventual replacement: as NATO has agreed, we must keep our sub-strategic capability up to date. The capability of delivery must also be part of any credible sub-strategic response.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The nuclear non-proliferation treaty has been signed by 138 countries, including Canada. If, as the right hon. Gentleman says, it is vital for the United Kingdom to have nuclear weapons, why is it not vital for those other countries to have them?

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, two of the objectives of that treaty are to ensure the peaceful development of nuclear power and to enable countries to take advantage of that while undertaking not to divert such knowledge and assistance as they have towards military ends. Of course, another objective is a reduction in nuclear capability. I have already mentioned the agreement reached by the nuclear planning group, which will reduce to a tenth of the previous level the number of sub-strategic nuclear warheads in Europe.

Even after the strategic arms reduction talks and the further reductions envisaged by President Gorbachev, the Soviet Union will have about 20 times more strategic ballistic missiles than the United Kingdom can deploy. There is also the worrying risk of proliferation to other countries. We must therefore ensure that we maintain our nuclear capability. Moreover, our determination in that regard is of vital interest to the 30,000 people who work in the nuclear programme. Constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) make a significant contribution.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Within what time scale will it be necessary for the United Kingdom to acquire a stand-off air-launched sub-strategic capability? Given the enhancement of defences, that must be increasingly important. Will my right hon. Friend also outline the basis on which systems are being evaluated and choices are being made?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend knows that we are looking closely at this issue. I can go no further than to say that we recognise that a replacement will be needed. The Government, in particular my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, are looking at alternative options.

The background against which we have set out our programme is clear. The starkness of the uncertainties that we face in the world and the real difficulties that the ending of the cold war is bringing make it very important that this country and our allies should make it absolutely clear to any potential aggressors where we stand on nuclear matters.

It is also important that it should be understood that this country adopts a consistent and relevant approach to nuclear matters. It is what our allies are looking for and are entitled to expect. A NATO summit communiqué has just been published. I understand that all the parties support NATO. I hope that they support NATO policies as well. These welcome changes have resulted from clear policies and resolution and have led to huge improvements.

We were faced with a very muddled position in the 1980s. There were so many siren voices opposing the firm and clear policies that we adopted at that time. I refer to the members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the ladies of Greenham Common and so many Labour

Members. Where are they now? Are they, like Erich Honecker and Egon Krenz, figures that have passed from the scenes of history? Where do they now stand? Some of them are still here. I am grateful that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is with us today. He is not a tall man, but he has a stature on the Opposition Benches —in terms of the real voices within the Labour party that he represents—that is considerably greater than that of some of those seated in front of him.

It is significant to note that three quarters of the Labour Members who are standing again at the next election have a clear anti-nuclear background. When one looks at the reinforcements seeking to come to the House—for example, in the shape of Bruce Kent, chosen as an official Labour party candidate—one sees that the idea that the Labour party is a pro-nuclear and strong NATO-supporting party is unrealistic. I suspect that it is not just on this side of the House that there are many hon. Members who hope deeply that Bruce Kent will not get there. I just wonder how many of those who sit on the Opposition Benches will be able to look him in the eye, if he comes here, and explain how it was that their membership of an organisation that they claimed to support for so long came to lapse.

One should also look at what has been said by those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench. The Leader of the Opposition once spoke of his most deeply held belief. It is not just what he said in 1983. In 1988, he sent to the CND magazine "Sanity"

"his congratulations to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament upon 30 years of effort to secure a nuclear-free United Kingdom,"

stressing the need

"to make and win the arguments for non-nuclear defence."

In March 1989 the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) signed Tribune's appeal in support of British unilateral nuclear disarmament. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) signed the same petition.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No.

In 1988, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), in that charming turn of phrase that he has, said that it was "nonsense on stilts" for Britain to pretend to be a nuclear power. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—another leading member of the shadow Cabinet—told *The Daily Telegraph* in May 1989:

"The purpose of retaining a deterrent is not to use it, or even to threaten to use it."

I do not think one ever heard of a bigger waste of money than a policy such as that. I appreciate the fact that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is not here today, seeking to elbow his way into yet another debate. I do not know how many hon. Members realise that in 1987 he sacked his research assistant for daring to write an article in support of British nuclear weapons. Does not the House think that if the right hon. Gentleman had any sense of decency he ought to offer his research assistant his job back, since the right hon. Gentleman is now making speeches explaining why it is necessary to have a nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: I am sorry. I know that it is an embarrassment to the hon. Gentleman, but I thought that he might support me.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman please give way?

Mr. King: No. I give credit to the hon. Gentleman. I believe that he is one of those who sticks to the Labour party's original policy. I hope that he has not changed his principles. He must allow me to express some irritation with the Labour party's present approach.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No. I am afraid that I have got more bad news for the hon. Gentleman. I must refer to a few more hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson)—a member of the shadow Cabinet—is still, I believe a vice-president of CND. Sixteen of the 22 members of the shadow Cabinet have an anti-nuclear background. Fourteen of them are either members of CND or of the parliamentary Labour party's section of CND. They have pretended to change, but they do not understand or support the deterrent. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said:

"The so-called British independent deterrent does not enhance the defence of this country."

He is entitled to hold that view and I should respect him if he stood up and said, "I hold that view." Has the hon. Gentleman changed his view? If he still holds it, it is the biggest waste of money that one can imagine to pretend, as he does from the Opposition Front Bench, that he would still keep the nuclear deterrent. Or would the hon. Gentleman not keep it? Is the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) right that if the Labour party can change its policies to win the election, certain right hon. and hon. Members know privately that they can change them again when they have won? If so, how many policies is that?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No. The hon. Gentleman does not speak for the Opposition. The Opposition are about to face the British people in a general election. The British people are entitled to make a choice, but that choice should be based on clear knowledge of what the Labour party's policy is. There should be no equivocation. At Question Time only this week it was made very clear when my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness——

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No. This is difficult and painful for the hon. Gentleman, but in this House one sometimes has to endure a little pain, grief and sadness on account of departed friends who may have supported the hon. Gentleman in the past but who have now left him.

How many policies does the Labour party have? The first is that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen try to pretend that they are deeply committed to the nuclear deterrent. Another policy is meant to appease CND activists on the Benches behind them. Most cynical of all is another Labour party policy that is meant to pacify the work force in Barrow. When we debated that, up jumped the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes)—another official Front-Bench spokesman on

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defence matters—and produced a fourth policy—not just the supine policy of pretending to go along with the nuclear deterrent but querying why the fourth boat could not be built more quickly.

I realised later why that was. After leaving the House I returned to my office and found in my mail VSEL's "Link" magazine for its employees. I found a picture in the magazine of shop stewards—employees of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.—who had been to the House. The hon. Member for Clackmannan had taken them to see the Leader of the Opposition. I shudder to think what promises they were given. The Labour party is probably going to have a fifth and a sixth Trident programme, because someone has told the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) that there might be some votes for him in Barrow. We see the shabby sight of the Labour party, who are seeking to form the next Government, being absolutely paralysed.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan did not need the poll on the British people's patriotism in *The Daily Telegraph* today to know that they are not prepared to abandon the deterrent while nuclear weapons are pointed at them. He must pretend that Labour will keep those weapons, but he knows that the majority of Labour Members oppose that.

Most cynical of all, the hon. Member for Clackmannan must pretend to the shop stewards and work force of VSEL that Labour would guarantee their jobs, when he knows perfectly well that if a Labour Government had been in power in recent years its 4,000 workers would have been thrown on the dole.

I ask the hon. Member for Clackmannan three straight questions that the House, the country, our allies and our service men should like to be answered. He must remember that, as we talk, our nuclear deterrent is being maintained by our service men to ensure that it offers the ultimate security. Does he now believe in the importance of keeping the strategic nuclear deterrent while other countries have nuclear weapons targeted on us? Will he ensure that the fourth Trident boat is built to guarantee the effective operation of that strategic deterrent? Does he support the NATO policy that is subscribed to by every other country in the NATO alliance—be it socialist, Conservative, Christian Democrat or Liberal—of sub-strategic nuclear forces being based in Europe and kept up to date? After years of our being castigated by Labour policy documents, without a single one on defence, the hon. Gentleman has a duty to tell the House where Labour stands.

10.21 am

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): If the Secretary of State will allow me, I shall answer his questions in the course of my speech. If he does not agree, no doubt he will intervene.

I recognise the Government's embarrassment in attacking parties for changing their policies. At the last election, and in 1979, we were told that in no circumstances would VAT be increased, yet in the past 10 years it has been increased twice. Perhaps more importantly, in the past few days the Government have had to use a guillotine, in unique circumstances, to dismantle one of their major election pledges—the poll tax. The need of political parties to review their policies and make changes as they see fit need not necessarily be the subject of criticism.

We welcome the debate because it offers an opportunity to consider nuclear policy. The focus of attention in the two-day estimates debate and in the individual service debates is often on other matters. We are happy to have the opportunity to assess, as the Secretary of State has, developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, especially since the coup of 28 August. We should carefully consider the command and control system and the changing character of the nuclear threat.

Labour's changes to its defence and nuclear policy have been the subject of much interest and have engaged the interest of the British people. Since the changes were made, the British people appear broadly to have supported us. The results of successive by-elections and Euro-elections show that a political party should listen to its supporters and make changes. In a democratic society, a political party must listen to its supporters and potential electors. We make no apology for doing so.

In the early days of this Parliament, before the collapse of the Berlin wall and the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty, a rather different note was struck by Conservative Members. The then Prime Minister regularly came to the Dispatch Box to abuse everyone who did not agree with her. I realise that that is her normal approach to political argument and debate, but I remember in particular that on 4 March 1988 she returned from a NATO summit and abused Labour Members for having no memory, no stomach, no spine and no guts—the usual moderate way in which she dealt with not only her political opponents but her so-called friends and colleagues. She said that we wanted a war-free Europe and that we need nuclear weapons to achieve it.

That was not the message of the Secretary of State this morning. In many respects, we agree with much of the information that he offered and, to a certain extent, his analysis. But the Conservative party's almost McCarthyite approach to people who have advocated nuclear disarmament in a variety of ways, particularly through the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, is, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of that organisation?" I make it clear that I have been, but I am no longer. I shall explain why I and many others have left the cause. I have no reason to be ashamed of it or of giving my reasons for leaving.

The issue in recent months has been the changes not only in the policies of the Opposition but in the emphasis and attitude of the Government. At Reykjavik in 1986, there was some embarrassment in American circles about the continuing hard-line stance adopted by the United Kingdom. Between 1987 and 1988, the Germans became increasingly hostile to the notion of short-range nuclear forces being located in central Europe and targeted on their eastern relations. The famous statement, "The shorter the range, the deader the German", left the Government particularly cold. They were indifferent, it would appear, to the plight not only of German citizens on the other side of the wall but of British troops located in Germany.

When the lack of credibility of the short-range nuclear forces became apparent, it was increasingly clear that the bottom rung of the so-called ladder of escalation had become rotten and decayed. The INF treaty eliminated the middle rungs of the ladder and the United States

budgetary concerns did away with the follow-on to Lance. We began to witness growing European disillusionment with the theory of flexible response as the scope for flexibility gradually diminished. General Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Europe, clearly said in the international defence review this March that the old-style flexible response is dead.

We must therefore consider its replacement and the nuclear arangements that will then be required. In the early days, it was recognised that if there was no third zero a dramatic reduction in land-based nuclear forces was possible. The changes in European attitudes were reflected in an improvement in east-west relations. Some may say that the first sign of this was the understandings reached at Reykjavik in 1986. The failure to hit the jackpot at the Hofte house was reviewed by some people with refief. We remember the cool reception given by the then Prime Minister to many of the reports from Reykjavik and the desperate calls and visits to the White House. The idea that the leaders of the two super-powers could set aside the thinking of the cold war and agree to a programme to eliminate nuclear weapons was too much for some Conservatives to handle. Although the eventual outcome was more modest, it was becoming increasingly clear in 1987 and 1988 that massive changes were taking place.

It is probably true to say that in about 1985-86 Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that the Soviet Union would no longer commit vast resources to a defence machine and to a war which it could not afford and which it would not win. Indeed, it could be argued that if there were any justification for star wars it was the fact that it so frightened the Soviet Union—because of the scale of the technology and because the amount of resources needed to back it were so great that they would have beggared that country—that it had to think again. That is the only argument that I have found in support of star wars. Nevertheless, that point has to be made and it was indicative of the sea change in Gorbachev's attitudes at that time.

Some would argue that that was a victory for the hard-line stance taken in the early 1980s, when Washington's near-apocalyptic concern about the evil empire caused a massive build-up in United States armaments. That build-up is still being paid for by the American people and is still a major cause of their deficit and their economic problems. However, others would argue that the critical factor was Gorbachev's willingness to take on the military industrial complex in his country and to recognise the social, political and economic consequences of withdrawing the military and strategic guarantees which Soviet support had given to the Warsaw pact Governments. It will probably emerge that the answer is somewhere between the two.

It is clear that the willingness of the United States and Soviet Union to think afresh about nuclear matters and to come to agreements and understandings in the late 1980s would have been regarded as unthinkable only a short time before. Unfortunately for Britain, the response of the then Prime Minister to those changes was to resist them up to the very last moment and to try to secure a form of words in whatever communiqué to which she was a party which tried to convey that very little had changed.

Throughout the 1980s the Labour party was committed to a defence policy which, with regard to nuclear weapons, required the Labour Government to renounce ownership of Polaris and to abandon the Trident programme. That policy marked a change in attitude from that of previous Labour Governments. It was not unanimously accepted by the membership or by the electorate. Indeed, I recall that on 15 February 1982 the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who was then a member of the Labour party, said during a debate on defence:

> "I make it quite clear that I am not a unilateralist. I recognise that the people of this country, having acquired a strategic nuclear deterrent, are unlikely to be so stupid as to give it up without getting something in exchange. That is just not on, in ordinary trade union bargaining terms, let alone in international negotiations. That is . . . a gut level posture, but it does not mean that there should be no discussions or divisions as we try to find our way through this problem." —[*Official Report*, 15 February 1982; Vol. 18, c. 52-53.]

That was a statement from someone who is no longer in the Labour party and who, I believe, now has a different view, but it was a clear summation of the different attitude of a minority within the Labour ranks.

Mr. Douglas: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will concede that, whatever posture I adopted in the Labour party, I made the nature of that posture perfectly clear to the electorate. In other words, I sought a personal mandate. Can he tell us whether at the next general election members of the Labour party—especially in Scotland—who are not in favour of the current exposition of Labour party policy will make that clear in their election addresses? I refer especially to the candidate to succeed the hon. Member who represents one of the Falkirk seats, a Mr. Ewing. The candidate has made it plain that he is still a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and does not support the Trident programme. Can the hon. Gentleman say that every member of the Labour party —especially in Scotland—will include such information in his election address?

Mr. O'Neill: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I must say that he does not appear to wish the charity and independence granted to him when he was a member of the Labour party to be extended to other people. That might be a feature of his change in attitude. As I have said before, I believe that the statement that the hon. Gentleman made at the time was wrong and when we changed our policy I thought that he was wrong again.

The issue was not only a source of controversy in the House and the country. In the 1983 general election different interpretations were put on our policy. The then leader and deputy leader said different things while the previous Labour Prime Minister expressed total opposition to any interpretation other than his own, which was similar to that of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West.

There was a feeling in the Labour party in the early 1980s that the membership wanted to do something about disarmament and about breaking the log-jam that appeared to have emerged in the nuclear arms race. Some members of the Labour party—some of them are here today and, given the opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that they will voice their opinions—have had a long-standing aversion to nuclear weapons. Some question the deterrence theory; others abhor the idea of nuclear annihilation and find it morally unacceptable to countenance the threat of its use; and others felt that a world without pacts and alliances would be better able to deal with the problems of international relations. Various strains were and have always been present in the Labour party. Some members have adapted

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their thinking to nuclear weapons because they have a specific pacifist standpoint. Others have taken that stance because of a commitment to neutralism, and so on.

Until the early 1980s not even a combination of those views held the majority for very long in the Labour party, but concern about the deployment of the cruise missile system and the frustration about the seemingly endless escalation of the early Thatcher-Reagan years convinced people in the Labour party that independent renunciation by Britain of nuclear weapons might give a sign to other nuclear powers that it was possible to call a halt. That argument had at its roots the nuclear debates of the 1950s which had given birth to the Aldermaston marches and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

In retrospect, that argument was probably based—almost paradoxically—on the inflated sense of our own importance which had driven the father of the British bomb—Ernest Bevin—to encourage the Attlee Government to develop the first programme. To be important internationally we had to have the bomb and the corollary was that to get rid of it would make us even more important and influential.

The experience of those of us who sought to argue Labour's position on nuclear weapons in the 1980s—not only in the House and throughout the country, but abroad—was somewhat different. In meetings with colleagues in the Socialist and Social Democratic parties in Europe—I have regular contact with those parties which are members of NATO—we found that even those who were outside NATO and who would be regarded as being of a neutralist disposition did not appear greatly concerned about whether Britain should give up nuclear weapons. The impact of an independent renunciation of nuclear weapons by Britain did not seem to them to have much resonance throughout the world. Certainly on visits that I made to Moscow and Washington specifically to discuss these matters there was, at best, studied indifference to Labour offers in this area.

By January 1989 the mood in the Kremlin was clear. It was not interested in separate deals with Britain or excited to any extent by bilateralism, as it was called. The Kremlin wanted to sustain what it considered to be the START process and to continue the talks that had been given impetus by the Reykjavik meeting. This morning the Secretary of State spoke about the lengthy period over which the START talks took place, but it is fair to say that for a long time little happened. It was only after Reykjavik that momentum was achieved. Certainly, the talks were given impetus by Reykjavik, but, equally importantly, they were given credibility by the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

That treaty was the first to eliminate a whole class of nuclear weapons. Equally importantly, it provided inspection and verification procedures of such an intrusive character that mutual trust and co-operation had to lie at the heart of the realisation of the treaty's aims. Therefore, while the prospects for a negotiated disarmament were good, in 1988-89 there were always the nagging doubts that the START treaty would be only a one-off and that to resume discussions one of the western nuclear powers would have to take the initiative.

That was why the Labour party in its 1989 document said that it would be prepared to start talking. We did not say that we were prepared to end the process or jump off when we reached what we considered to be a useful stopping place for us. We believed then, as we believe now, that we had to continue a dialogue with the Soviet Union on this issue. That was one reason why we were anxious to show that we did not believe that the whole of the Trident programme needed to be completed as planned.

Mr. Douglas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. If I understand him correctly, he is proceeding to make an argument for putting Polaris and its equipment into a bargaining regime with the Soviet Union. How was it possible in the late 1980s to put Trident into a bargaining regime, when we will not possess it until late 1994? Will he explain that?

Mr. O'Neill: The hon. Gentleman and I may have some disagreements, but I have respect for his command of basic arithmetic. We were endeavouring to develop the policy that would become the programme of a Labour Government who would take power in about 1990-91 and remain in office until about 1995-96, by which time we would have the beginnings of the Trident programme. Both the Trident and Polaris systems, whether clapped out or in embryo, were legitimate areas of concern for negotiation at that time. We saw a case for considering what our nuclear arsenal would be and whether it was completely necessary. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question about Trident in a couple of minutes.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am trying hard to follow the hon. Gentleman's logic. In what sense would it be a wise policy for the United Kingdom to consider putting forward Polaris or, ultimately, Trident for negotiation with the Soviets on nuclear capabilities? Even if we were to obtain substantial concessions and eliminate all our strategic nuclear weapons, we could not eliminate all theirs, so we would merely leave them with a residual capability which would be overwhelming and a continual menace to ourselves. How is that good for the security of the British people?

Mr. O'Neill: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman has not grasped what I implied. I said that the Soviet Union was not interested in doing a bilateral deal. The Soviet Union was indifferent to that. What was important was that in the event of a START treaty marking the end of the START process—the discussion on nuclear disarmament between the main nuclear powers—the secondary nuclear powers, such as ourselves, France and China, should try to retain, maintain or, indeed, establish a dialogue with the Soviet Union. That was the context of our policy in 1989. I freely admit that things have changed since, but that was part of the argument. We wanted to retain what the Soviets had called a process. We wanted that process to continue. We were fearful that a halt or a delay would result in other unfortunate occurrences in the Soviet Union.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and I visited some European capitals and Washington, it was clear to us that the whole character of the theory of nuclear strategy was under review. Germans of all parties were resistant to further deployments of short and medium-range forces. The Soviets were willing to reduce those forces. There was the prospect of eliminating the disparity between the Warsaw pact and NATO conventional forces and of short-range nuclear forces filling that gap. The traditional

justification for short-range nuclear forces was that, as we did not have the number of forces to match those of the Soviet Union, we would use our short-range nuclear forces as a potential deterrent.

There were increasing public expressions of scepticism about arguments such as the "use them or lose them" theory for tactical nuclear weapons. The argument goes that if we had short-range nuclear weapons at the front, in the event of a rapid advance there would always be the danger that a commander would have no choice but to use those weapons, either because he could not get rid of them back to headquarters, or perhaps to start a nuclear conflagration. At that time, it was becoming increasingly clear in discussions of nuclear strategy that strong voices were in favour of NATO moving towards a commitment of no first use of nuclear weapons.

Labour unveiled its policy on defence and disarmament in May 1989—after all the public expressions of the shadow Cabinet that the Secretary of State quoted today. If he looks at the dates of all those expressions, he will see that we published our statement in May, even after my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) had made his remarks.

Mr. Tom King: What about the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson)?

Mr. O'Neill: My hon. Friend was not quoted.

Mr. King: I thought that the hon. Lady was there, too.

Mr. O'Neill: My hon. Friend was a member of the committee.

Our policy was clear. We were committed to the continuance of Britain's nuclear programme. The British Polaris submarines would stay on patrol and the Trident programme would proceed. We felt, however, that the accuracy of the new system, the flexibility of use that the extended range afforded and the improved refit and maintenance arrangements all meant that it would be easier to have at least one boat available at all times, although we were to have only three. Since then the increase in warning time has merely served to reinforce the view.

That view is not the preserve of the Labour party. A number of naval and maritime strategists have questioned the need for a fourth boat. James Eberle, for example, the former head of Chatham House and former chief of naval operations in the Atlantic, has supported it.

As the Secretary of State said, the tendering process for the fourth boat has started. Should it be completed before the next election, the Labour Government will be in a position to examine the full costs of cancellation. It has been suggested that the contracts for the earlier boats in the programme have entailed penal cancellation charges. I say, "It has been suggested", because, for sound commercial reasons, the Government never make such information available. The possibility of penal cancellation charges in the public domain is a rumour; I put it no more strongly than that. If that were carried forward, the termination of the contract for the fourth boat could be more costly than its completion and subsequent deployment. The Secretary of State shakes his head. Perhaps he would care to tell the House the status of cancellation clauses, what the penalties would be and what that would mean for a future Government—Conservative or Labour—who decided to cancel. That would be a major breakthrough and would certainly assist us in formulating our policy as we move towards government.

Mr. Tom King: The hon. Gentleman certainly needs assistance. I have never heard a more hesitant and pathetic approach to the problem. The hon. Gentleman must first decide where his responsibility lies. Does he believe that a fourth boat is needed? That is the point: is a fourth boat needed to maintain our deterrent? If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is not, why does not he have the courage to stand up and say so? Whatever stage we have reached and whatever the problems with cancellation charges, given the running costs of the fourth Trident submarine, we are bound to save money in the long run. One cannot duck the issue by pretending that the decision will depend on the date of the election and on which bills have or have not arrived from VSEL or other contractors.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for trying to answer the question, but can he improve on that answer and tell the House clearly whether a Labour Government would or would not have the fourth boat?

Mr. O'Neill: The position is as I have stated and I will repeat it for the benefit of the right hon. Gentleman. I do not personally consider that there is a need for a fourth boat. In 1964, it was argued that we could not provide an adequate deterrent without five boats, but we took the decision to proceed with only four and we carried it through.

On the question of cancellation charges and other matters, the Minister has made it clear that he is not prepared to talk in terms of sums. I do not think that even the right hon. Gentleman would be prepared to say that every programme remains the same, irrespective of costs.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Perhaps I may assist my hon. Friend. The Secretary of State was being totally disingenuous because, if the cancellation cost of the fourth boat is the same as the cost of cancelling the first boat would have been, it would be cheaper to build the thing —so saving on the unemployment benefit that would otherwise be payable to the constituents of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks)—and not deploy it.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Minister cannnot intervene in an intervention.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful for the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam), but I realise that the Minister responsible now wishes to intervene.

Mr. Alan Clark: The hon. Gentleman said that he personally does not want a fourth boat. Can he say whether it is the Labour party's policy to have a fourth boat or not? That was the question that he was asked by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. O'Neill: The Labour policy is clear. I am sorry if the Minister finds it difficult to understand that, when I say "personally" in this respect, I mean that I am expressing my view and the view of my party.

Mr. Alan Clark: Ah!

Mr. O'Neill: I am glad that we have cleared the matter up.

Mr. Douglas: Have we?

Mr. O'Neill: May I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ask the clype behind me to be quiet? If we are to have a serious debate, we can do without the barracking that passes as comment from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. O'Neill: In the Labour party's view, the Government have not advanced an adequately forceful strategic case for a fourth boat. We have made that clear ever since 1989 when we issued our policy statement. We believe that the country can be adequately defended by three Trident boats. If we find, on reaching office, that the programme is sufficiently far advanced to render it foolhardy to go back on it, we shall review the matter carefully. We have said that consistently.

Mr. Franks: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that what he is saying is crucial to the livelihood of thousands of people in my constituency. I want to be absolutely clear precisely what he is saying. I shall repeat it and, if I have it wrong, I trust that he will correct me. As I understand it, he is saying that it is the official policy of the Labour party not to build the fourth boat and that his only reservation arises from the fact that certain clauses in the contract might make cancellation commercially prohibitive. The hon. Gentleman is speaking from the Front Bench on behalf of his party. I assume, therefore, that what he has said represents the majority view within his party.

Mr. O'Neill: It is the policy of the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman can make whatever he wants of it, but it will still not save his seat.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): Before the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) gets on his high horse, perhaps he would care to consider the devastating consequences for his constituents—and any constituents involved in the manufacturing of submarines—as a result of the collapse of submarine orders. Those who may at some stage look at VSEL's order books may care to consider that, even if the fourth submarine is constructed, the consequences for employment in such constituencies will remain severe because of what the Government have done in relation to naval and submarine construction.

Mr. O'Neill: The sea-launched ballistic missile system that we have been discussing does not account for all our nuclear arsenal and we must look at what is left. Over the past 40 years, there have been shifts in nuclear strategy and changes in technology and in the appreciation of the perceived threat. When all that was available was the free-fall bomb, air-delivered systems were essential to the deterrent, but, once the first land and sea-launched ballistic missiles were to hand, it was possible to have weapons systems that operated from comparatively safe sanctuaries and, in the case of Polaris, from the virtually impenetrable depths of the sea. The introduction of MIRVing further improved the lethality and accuracy of the weapons. Miniaturisation enabled small nuclear artillery shells to be produced and that, in its turn, made way for the development of the theory that we now call flexible response.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was one of the main authors of that doctrine in the 1960s and today it enjoys some credibility due to the efforts of the present Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, who has argued clearly for the theory of flexible response in a series of public lectures and articles. Despite the quality of the logic, such theories are, in my view, based upon the flawed assumption that it would always be possible to deter the enemy by the controlled use of nuclear weapons of increasing size and on the assumption that nuclear war fighting could be discrete and managed. But in battle as in life, as Robert Burns said:

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley".

Certainly, many serious military men have always been fearful of the use or implied threat of short-range nuclear forces. Many will be relieved at the announcement by the Secretary of State this morning that many of these weapons will no longer be available.

Nevertheless, we continue to be faced with a large empire whose structure is creaking and whose nationalities, after decades of Soviet subjugation and, in some cases, centuries of Russian imperialism, are seeking independence. That third-world economy with a superpower arsenal could be in terminal decline. The command and control systems for its nuclear arsenal may still be intact, but it is not clear whether the terms and conditions of the draft treaty will be adhered to. It is not certain who wants to own which system. We know that Russia would like to assume responsibility for the arsenal within its borders. The positions of Byelorussia and Kazakhstan are less clear, while the Ukraine, with the nightmare of Chernobyl etched on its consciousness, wants to rid itself of those weapons. We must help to clear up the confusion, dismantle—where appropriate—the weapons and assist in the disposal of the fissile material. Until that capability is brought under systematic control, although the threat may have changed, it will still exist in some shape or form.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you received a request from the Department of Trade and Industry to make a statement on the sale of the Export Credits Guarantee Department? We have heard that, far from realising the £100 million which was originally talked of, the sale may now fetch as little as £6 million. That would be an appalling way to dispose of a valuable public asset. Has there been a request for a statement on that subject?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, there has been no request to make a statement. Doubtless, the hon. Lady's request will have been heard.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether the Treasury Minister has applied to make such a statement, because this concerns the Treasury as well as the Department of Trade and Industry? Yet again, a piece of the family silver is being sold off at rock-bottom price, at great——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot add to what I have already said.

Mr. O'Neill: As I said, the Soviet nuclear capability needs to be brought under systematic control. There is no

division in the House on that matter. It is fair to say that the problems created by those developments can be handled. However, the uncertainty of the minor and near-nuclear powers remains—India and Pakistan are two obvious contenders. The changes in American foreign policy may present grounds for optimism on that subject. America's new attitude towards India may result in its having a great influence over that country in its relations with the United States' old ally, Pakistan.

I am not sure whether it is possible to have the same optimism about Israel in the middle east. Indeed, it is most unlikely that Israel will give up its nuclear capability in the foreseeable future, so long as it foresees a threat to its land from its neighbour.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. O'Neill: No, I should like to develop my argument. I have allowed several interruptions and, although I do not wish to be discourteous, I should get on.

The problems of Iraq are well known. We have seen that the inspection facilities of the International Atomic Energy Agency are completely inadequate. Worthy though that organisation's aims may be, it has neither the resources nor the authority to undertake the vital work which the United Nations has given it. Therefore, it must be incumbent on the Government of this country, as one of the Permanent Five and one of the main sponsors of the United Nations, to give a clear lead in seeking greater authority, support and resources for the IAEA.

In some countries, the prospect of inspection, verification and access is not as great. I refer in particular to North Korea. If there is one country that we would have difficulty in isolating, it is North Korea. How can we isolate a pariah and a country which, by its own admission, does not wish to deal with most of the world? The parts of the world with which it deals would probably not be too critical about its nuclear development anyway. That is the most difficult and persistent area of non-proliferation. There are grounds for qualified optimism because in the past 18 months South Africa has renounced its nuclear ambition, no longer considering that there is a regional threat to the authority of its state. Argentina and Brazil have also decided that they will no longer pursue military nuclear development. That have concluded that the differences between two democracies in South America are not great enough to warrant arming themselves to the teeth.

We must build on the experience of regional disputes which shows that there can be a role for international law, the United Nations and, above all, the permanent five of the Security Council. That is where Britain, China, France, the United States and the components of what was the Soviet Union have a clear responsibility. They must show potential proliferators that they are prepared to secure further reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

It has already been accepted that it is possible to de-MIRV ballistic missiles. We must consider whether it would be desirable or possible to do so to sea-launched ballistic missiles. It is often said that the quantitative increase in Trident firepower is to accommodate, or seek to pierce, the anti-ballistic missile defences that have been established in the Soviet Union. The Secretary of State advanced that argument this morning when he was asked about the increase in the size of the Trident arsenal. However, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald):

"Under the 1972 United States-Soviet ABM treaty and subsequent protocols, the Soviet Union is limited to a maximum of 100 ABM launchers located within a radius of 150 km around either the national capital or one area containing silo fields.

Future Soviet ABM deployments are similarly expected to conform to the 1972 treaty and its protocols or any future renegotiations of the, agreement."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. *613-14*.]

It may be helpful if, before the end of today's debate, the Secretary of State and his colleagues could get together to explain what they mean by the enhancement in the anti-ballistic missile capability of the Soviet Union which requires us to make a quantum leap in the warhead capability of the Trident programme. If we could have an agreement on reductions in the number of warheads, it would show clearly that although we possess nuclear weapons, their scale does not have to be as great as we considered in the recent past.

There is still work to be done on maritime arms control. Those hon. Members who take an interest in such matters will know that it is a hobby horse of mine. However, as long as there is a Soviet nuclear presence in the Kola peninsula and Soviet forces in the numbers presently there, we shall continue to have a threat to our continent and to Norway, a state which we, more than any other country in NATO, are obliged to support. Therefore, it is in our interests to address the problem of maritime arms control, to secure reductions in the size of the Soviet fleet and to reach agreement on the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap area.

Finally, we must work hard to convince our NATO colleagues that we do not desire the continued presence of short-range and tactical nuclear forces on the continent of Europe. In short, we should be arguing for a third zero within NATO. That is not to say that the Labour party would not have signed last week's communiqué—we would have. We are democrats and accept that until we have convinced people by the force of our argument, we should go along with the view of the majority of the organisations of which we are a member. We are not talking about jumping off or about creating unnecessary trouble, but we consider that that is a legitimate concern for a British Government——

Mr. Tom King *rose*——

Mr. O'Neill: I shall give way to the Secretary of State in a minute. He is entitled to have an opinion. More than any others in the alliance, we have stated our willingness to host and to accept our nuclear responsibilities during the years that such forces have been present in Europe.

Mr. Tom King: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. He has made his position clear. He is saying that he is not in favour of NATO's present policy of maintaining adequate sub-strategic forces based in Europe and of ensuring that they are maintained and kept up to date. Although he has said that he is not in favour of that, he would nevertheless still keep them if that was NATO's decision. The Labour party would make its contribution and support the sub-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. I take it that that is his view.

Mr. O'Neill: That is correct. To make it perfectly clear, I repeat that we are not saying that Britain should acquire

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a subsequent follow-on generation of weapons to replace the free-fall bombs that are nearing the end of their useful life.

Mr. Wilkinson: That is an incredible contribution.

Mr. O'Neill: No. On that issue, there is little enthusiasm in other parts of Europe for air-launched systems. There is little requirement from other European members for Britain either to have or not to have such weapons. At the moment, the moratorium that the United States has announced on the development of its tactical air-to-surface missile programme means that we would have great difficulty getting a credible system from the United States if we wanted one. If we had to go to France, that would create other questions which may or may not be quite as acceptable to some of the hon. Friends of the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), whose suspicion of things European have been evidenced—*[Interruption.]* Not necessarily the Conservative Members who are present, but other Tory Members probably would not be quite so keen on—as they would see it—mortgaging their nuclear future to the French.

Our view is that the maintenance, deployment and continued support for the sea-launched ballistic missile programmes of both Polaris and Trident would be sufficient for us to make a contribution to the defence of the west and of these islands.

Mr. Tom King: It is helpful of the hon. Gentleman to give way on this important point because this is one of the questions that I asked him specifically and which he is now seeking to address. He has made it clear that he would not necessarily support the idea of independent nuclear forces in Europe being contributed to by the United Kingdom, although the NATO communiqué draws attention to their overall deterrence value and security to the alliance to which they contribute. However, he is also saying that if NATO decided to maintain that policy, which is the unanimous policy of all the NATO countries, any future Labour Government would maintain a sub-strategic nuclear capability that would be based in Europe and kept up to date. That is an important statement because it is not in keeping with the Labour party's previous policy statement. It would be helpful to have that on the record.

Mr. O'Neill: If I have to qualify it once again, I shall do so, because it seems that the Secretary of State is adamant in his attempts wilfully to misrepresent our position. We will not proceed with our own TASM programme——

Mr. Wilkinson: Or keep it up do date.

Mr. O'Neill: One cannot keep up to date something that does not exist. That is the first point. We are talking about the replacement of the WE177 when its useful life has ended with a system that has a far greater range, is more flexible and is potentially more destabilising. It may also be more useful in some belligerent or bellicose sense, but if we are talking about weapons that will be used by NATO in the NATO area, I have great difficulty envisaging how such weapons would be deployed or used. I should like to go on——

Mr. Tom King *rose*——

Mr. O'Neill: No, I am sorry——

Mr. King *rose*——

Mr. O'Neill: No—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the Secretary of State and the hon. Gentleman that this is not a private dialogue. Other hon. Members want to participate in the debate——

Mr. Corbyn: When do the wind-up speeches start?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the Secretary of State could leave some of these matters for the Minister to deal with when he seeks to catch my eye at the end of the debate.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful for that stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I realise that I have a duty to enlighten the House this morning and I am endeavouring to do that, but I am mindful of the fact that other hon. Members wish to participate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—and I shall not accept any further interventions.

Not only do we wish to see reductions in our existing or potential arsenal, maritime arms control and a third zero being acquired or established in Europe, but I should like to think that we could take advantage of the Soviet offer of a moratorium on testing to establish how clear its wishes are in respect of a comprehensive TASM treaty. In the past, suspicion has always arisen over requests for a moratorium on testing because such calls have always come immediately after the completion of a testing programme. We should be prepared to use the moratorium to take advantage of what we consider to be the Soviet Union's improved attitude to see whether this is a confidence-building measure that could lead to a comprehensive test ban treaty. We are conscious that the advances in modelling and monitoring techniques and the like are such that most of the work—probably all of it—on the maintenance of existing systems and on systems that are already in the pipeline could be carried out by laboratory testing techniques. Old-style testing gave a clear signal to all those who were potential proliferators that if the major nuclear powers were carrying out such testing, why should not they?

Turning to my final point, I echo the view expressed by the Secretary of State. We have to give due credence to the significance of crisis management techniques. We must consider how we handle that in the short term, especially in relation to what was the Soviet Union and the nuclear powers there. We must also seek to establish means whereby nuclear or near-nuclear powers give clear undertakings on such matters. In terms of arms control, we must also consider the ability to transfer the technology of one system to a nuclear system.

The point about ballistic missiles has been well made. We must have control over ballistic missile production and sales. If we are committed to doing that for ballistic weapons, as we are committed to it terms of chemical weapons, we must recognise that the management of the market in ballistic equipment must be far more tightly structured and organised than has been the case in the recent past.

Security is not only about defence. Nuclear weapons can be a source of assurance in certain circumstances. They can pose a threat to the countries that do not have them—and to those that do. In the past six months, we have seen greater changes in all our thinking on nuclear weapons than ever before. The Labour party is committed

to sustaining that momentum. It is committed to sustaining that momentum while it retains the British nuclear deterrent. It will continue to have that nuclear deterrent until such time as all the other owners or potential owners of nuclear weapons still have ideas in their heads about their ownership and development.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. We have said that we believe that the objective of a nuclear-free world is something which we can still pursue, but until that is achieved, Britain will have a Labour Government who are are committed to sustaining the nuclear defence of this country for as long as it is necessary or for as long as required to do so.

11.19 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the devastating strategic assault which he delivered, with the precision of a Trident missile, on the CND background of so many Opposition Front-Bench Members. It does not require even a sub-strategic nuclear weapon. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) only needed to fire a conventional torpedo to sink the speech by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), and to reveal the astonishing view that the Opposition hold about the fourth Trident boat.

When the debate started there were just 10 members of the parliamentary Labour party present and only half of them support the present line taken by the Opposition, which I assume would have been carried on the casting vote of the Labour Whip, who was present. I assume that he is in favour of the present Opposition party view.

Mr. Flynn: How does the hon. Gentleman know what our views are? For instance, what is my view?

Sir Philip Goodhart: I assumed that the hon. Gentleman was more or less in favour of his party's policy.—[HON. MEMBERS: "He may be against it."] In that case I fear that even the casting vote of the Labour Whip would not have carried the Back Benches in support of the official policy.

Dr. Reid: I shall not tempt fate by asking what the hon. Gentleman has on me, although I was rather disturbed that I was omitted from the litany of abuse this morning. Since the hon. Gentleman was putting numbers on record and was good enough to give way, I want to put it on record that the party that defends Britain—and regards that as the highest priority—could find only four Back Benchers for this debate, out of more than 300 Members of Parliament.

Sir Philip Goodhart: We are broadly satisfied with my right hon. Friend's policy, with some reservations, which I shall explain in a moment. Although nuclear debates no longer attract large numbers of hon. Members on either side of the House, we are entering an age of nuclear proliferation, which increases the risk of nuclear conflict, rather than decreases it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave his imprimatur to a report of the International Security Information Service, which noted that countries already deploying nuclear-capable ballistic missiles include Afghanistan, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Syria and Vietnam.

Earlier this week the American Secretary of State Mr. James Baker completed his discussions in Peking, where he tried—sadly it seems unsuccessfully—to stop the Chinese communist authorities from selling systems with nuclear capability to other countries.

I am glad to see the chairman of the political committee of the North Atlantic Assembly is with us—or he was with us. I see that the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) is returning to the Chamber. The assembly discussed a report last month which suggested that Kazakhstan would be a more important nuclear power than France or the United Kingdom by the end of the century. That view was reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Last week the American Defense Secretary, discussing the problems of proliferation, said on a television programme:

"The thing I'm really concerned about would be . . . the fact that the Soviets have 27 to 30 thousand nuclear warheads and that the Soviet Union is coming apart literally, . . . that will result in dissemination of knowledge, about weapons of mass destruction . . . in the form of individuals who've got technical expertise going to work for other countries, and possibly even the flow of some of those weapons themselves to third parties."

At that point the interviewer said, "Sales?"

Mr. Dick Cheney replied:

"Possibly sales. You have to be concerned about the size of that stockpile and what happens to it over time."

Even if we discard the idea of a further military coup in Moscow, it is plain that we live in a dangerous world with dangerous states standing on the brink of owning nuclear missiles. In those circumstances it would clearly be lunacy——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman's argument about the problems of proliferation is extremely important. It was disappointing that the Secretary of State had only one approach to proliferation—that we have to keep a deterrent. Rather than merely talking about a deterrent, he should have been telling the House to try now to replace the non-proliferation treaty, which runs out in three years' time, and which has proved so ineffective. The Secretary of State ought to have made a positive statement about how we will achieve a replacement for the non-proliferation treaty which would provide an alternative to a simple deterrent.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I somehow doubt whether a non-proliferation treaty, however improved, would have much impact on Iraq, Libya, Syria and North Korea, without mentioning the other countries on that list. I believe, and I am sure that the majority of people in this country believe, that in a proliferating world, it is essential for us to keep our nuclear defences. It would clearly be lunacy for this country to abandon the Trident system and quite wrong not to build the fourth boat, whatever the terms of the contract may be.

There is rather less unanimity about the proposal that we should develop a new tactical air-to-surface missile. On 14 October the Secretary of State argued:

"The key point, however, is that the credibility of strategic nuclear forces depends on the existence of a credible sub-strategic deterrent to provide the link with conventional forces. The fact that ground-launched weapons are now being scrapped puts increased emphasis on the need to ensure that the air-launch element is kept up to date."—[*Official Report*, 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 58.]

He repeated that argument this morning.

Frankly, I doubt whether we need the sort of tactical air-to-surface missile that the Secretary of State is talking about. It will be very expensive. The Americans reckon

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that they are saving $2·3 billion by cancelling their short range attack missile SRAM T and SRAM 2 development programmes. If we go ahead with the joint development of the ASLP French alternative or the other American, Martin Marietta, proposal the cost could be very high indeed. It could well be about £2 billion.

There will also be problems with basing dual-capable aircraft equipped with stand-off nuclear missiles on the continent of Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, a number of our European NATO allies have become increasingly reluctant to have any nuclear weapons on their soil. I am sure that German doubts about accepting aircraft with short-range tactical nuclear missiles were a factor in the Americans' decision to stop developing their short-range attack missile systems.

We must also face the uncomfortable fact that the new nuclear threat comes from countries thousands of miles from our airbases. Libya, for example, is 2,300 km from this country. The range of the Tornado GRI is about 2,000 km——

Mr. Wilkinson: That is an invalid point. My hon. Friend will remember the effective raid from this country conducted by the United States air force with conventional weapons against Libya. It had a salutary effect.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I supported that raid, but I must point out that it involved a great deal of complex in-flight refuelling to get the aircraft from Upper Heyford base, near where I live, to Libya. That is not to mention the political complexities that were involved.

The new stand-off weapon carrying a nuclear warhead with a yield of between 10 and 300 kilotonnes should add about 20 per cent. to the range of the Tornados. Even so, reaching Libya would be difficult.

So the Secretary of State is planning to spend a great deal of money on a weapon of questionable effectiveness. Is there a cheaper, simpler and more effective means of producing a small sub-strategic nuclear force? I accept the argument that there is a need for such a force. Some hon. Members have argued that the new Trident system, with or even without the fourth boat, gives us more nuclear strategic capacity than we need. Against that, it has been argued that anti-ballistic missile systems are being developed and may appear within the next 30 years.

Given the state of Soviet collapse, it is extremely difficult to imagine that that country will be capable of mounting an effective anti-ballistic missile defence within the foreseeable future, and I do not believe that Iran, Iraq, Syria or Vietnam are working on anti-ballistic missile systems.

I note that, because of the extra strategic capacity that we will have, some nuclear theorists have argued that we should build the fourth boat and seal up some of the missile tubes. That seems an odd suggestion. I think that some of our Trident missiles should be single low-yield nuclear missiles with small warheads, in the 10 to 300 kilotonne tactical range. Trident missiles are expensive. We read today that they will cost about £15 million each; but if 20 of the Trident missiles that we are to purchase were converted to a sub-strategic role that would be much cheaper than developing a brand new stand-off weapon.

A new tactical sub-strategic system would be wholly secure, for Trident is the most secure delivery system there is. There will be no range problems, as their effective range will be between 2,500 and 12,500km—and their accuracy is already proved.

We would need a new low-yield warhead, but that would be needed for our new tactical air-to-surface missile in any event. It can be developed within the time available.

Will this relatively cheap and simple sub-strategic option be seriously considered? I doubt it, because it would sharply diminish the nuclear role of the Royal Air Force; and in the battles over "Options for Change", senior Air Force officers and what one might call Air Force civil servants ran rings around their opponents in the Department and even around some of my ministerial friends.

I urge the Secretary of State to abandon this extremely expensive project and to deploy a Trident sub-strategic option, using some of the savings that could be obtained to keep some of the infantry battalions that he is proposing scrap. Unlike the TASM, those battalions constitute a force that we are going to need.

11.35 am

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) has frightened me to death. Imagine the reaction of Soviet missile controllers when they see a boost phase Trident missile: they do not know what is on it or what fired it or where it is going, but they do know that they must get ready for Armageddon. Faced with a choice between that and the tactical air-to-surface missile, I would prefer TASM—although I would not want either.

I thank the Secretary of State for the way in which he conducted the debate, although I did not appreciate his McCarthyite question, "Were you or were you not ever a member of CND?" Yes, like some of my hon. Friends, I was—but times have changed. The speed of change in defence matters has become increasingly rapid, more so between 1987 and now than between the start of the cold war and 1987, with the possible exception of the building of the Berlin wall.

Policies change to take account of what is happening, the speed of what is happening and the direction in which events are headed. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) admirably outlined the reasons for the policy change that my party has adopted.

It is not good enough for the Government to tell us, "You would say this." Of course, many members of the Labour party are still members of CND. There are a lot of members of CND in the Liberal Democrat party.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Wrong.

Mr. McWilliam: There are still a few. Many CND members do not belong to any party. When I first joined CND it was not even unilateralist, although it subsequently became so. I think that the conclusion is that times have changed.

The Secretary of State was slightly disingenuous when he tried to suggest that the cut in sub-strategic munitions that has been agreed was not a unilateral decision by President Bush, with the British Government hanging on his coat-tails. The Soviet Union responded positively a few days later. To suggest that that decision was anything other than unilateral is wrong. Therefore, presumably, the old argument used by the right hon. Member for Henley

(Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State for Defence about one-sided disarmament is no longer valid. The Government accept that, because they have already gone along with the Bush initiative that produced the kind of response that many of us argued was necessary to break the log-jam.

The second-zero goal has been sought and we have already had successful START negotiations with the Soviet Union. START 2 has already begun, but who knows what reductions will be agreed in those negotiations? No doubt there will be even greater reductions in the strategic weapons of the United States and the Soviet Union than were agreed under START 1. Therefore, the proportion of NATO nuclear weapons held by the United Kingdom—and by France, which is outside the military command structure—will be of even greater significance in the future. It is, therefore, important that we adopt the approach advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan and that we join the negotiations on the basis of our current capability. Those negotiations will present considerable difficulties.

I had an interesting visit to NATO on Tuesday and I entirely accept the Secretary of State's point about the present control and security of the existing Soviet arsenals in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and in Kazakhstan. However, those republics have already said that they want to be independent. None of those countries has ever had any democratic tradition and it will be extremely difficult for them to achieve our level of democracy so that we can debate such things openly. It will be extremely difficult for them not to use the nuclear weapons on their territory as bargaining counters in an eventual exchange.

The Secretary of State reminded us that President Yeltsin has argued for a dual-key approach to the control of nuclear weapons, which means that the republics and the central Government would each have a key. I remember the arguments that we had in the House about such a dual-key approach for cruise missiles. It seems that it is a good idea for President Yeltsin to have the second key, but it was never considered a good idea for the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger)—then Secretary of State for Defence—to have such a key from the Americans. What double standards.

The Government have tried to suggest that they are the custodians of our defence and future nuclear capability, and that we are not. I must remind the House that it was not the Labour party which decided to privatise our atomic weapons production establishments on the same basis as the American model—that model resulted in Rocky Flats. Now the United States does not have the ability to make new warheads for its Trident missile and it will have to use recovered ones from other missiles. The Conservative party took that decision, but it did not appear in its manifesto. At the last election, the Conservatives did not go to the country and say, "We believe in nuclear defence, so we will privatise atomic weapon manufacturing in this country." They knew what the reaction would be, but they went ahead. The Minister may state all the arguments about a compliance officer, but I am not confident that safety standards will be maintained. I do not believe that safety will be paramount over production schedules and costs. I am not satisfied that the Government have paid sufficient attention to the Drell report on nuclear safety in America and how that applies to the manufacture of nuclear weapons here.

People speak about the WE177 as though it is about to fall apart tomorrow. It may be an old dog, but there are many years left in it. It remains an effective and extremely flexible weapon. There is no need to jump for the TASM option. A recent report from the Select Committee on Defence stated that we should acquire the technology to build such a missile, but that we should not build it or deploy it because there is no identifiable threat against which it could be used.

The Government have been extremely reticent about discussing the problems that we are encountering with the Polaris submarine and the hunter-killer submarines because of the reactor and the power system. If I were the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) I would be arguing for the replacement of the hunter-killers on safety grounds. That would give Barrow more work. That is a far more sensible suggestion than the hon. Gentleman's argument that the future of the Barrow work force hangs on the fourth Trident submarine. It used to hang on the Upholder class, production of which was brutally slashed by the Government, equally, it now hangs on the next class of the hunter-killer submarines. As a maritime nation, we will need such submarines.

Mr. Franks: Although I accept that to those who are unfamiliar with the time involved in constructing a submarine, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion may sound plausible, what would happen to employment opportunities in my constituency as a result? Let us assume that there was a general election on the Thursday, a Labour Government on the Friday and the Labour Cabinet met on the Saturday and cancelled the fourth Trident submarine. What would the people in the shipyards do on the Monday morning?

Mr. McWilliam: They would go to work.

Mr. Franks: How?

Mr. McWilliam: Presumably they still have buses in Barrow, but, given the Government's transport policy, who knows?

Those workers would go to work and say to the VSEL—Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited—management, "What are we tendering for? What is the long lese? What are we going to use that hull for? What are the components for?" The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness has outlined an extremely unlikely scenario because he is not privy to the contents of the first three Trident contracts. As a member of the Defence Committee, I am privy to that knowledge, but I will not tell the hon. Gentleman about it because I am bound by commercial confidentiality restraints. If the fourth contract is the same as the other three, the decision to be taken by the Labour Cabinet will not be about whether the workers should start work on the submarine on the Monday morning, but whether they should complete that work and, if so, whether they should install the weapons system.

In the meantime, if NATO insists that we have to have a nuclear deterrent, we must decide what we should do about Polaris, because it is a busted flush. The Secretary of State may argue that we may have to have one submarine on patrol at a given time to give us a credible deterrent, but the Secretary of State has already given it away—we do not have a credible deterrent.

Mr. Franks *rose*—

Mr. McWilliam: I will not give way as the hon. Gentleman will get his own kick. I am not afraid to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but, as other hon. Members want to speak, I shall resume my seat and listen with interest to what the hon. Gentleman has to say when he is called.

11.48 am

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): It is a rare occasion when I, as an hon. Member representing a northern constituency, am able to participate in a debate on a Friday. The last time I had that privilege was about eight years ago when I introduced a private Member's Bill on cycle tracks. That Bill was concerned with safety and today's debate concerns a matter of vastly greater importance, the safety of future generations.

I am sure that my constituents appreciate that I have cancelled various engagements and appointments so that I could be present to put their case. There can be no debate in the House on any subject that affects a constituency more than today's debate affects Barrow, for the immediate economic future of the area that I represent depends on the future of the fourth Trident.

The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) could not answer my earlier question, but, as a member of the Defence Committee, he ought to appreciate more than most that one cannot build Land-Rovers and the next day decide to switch to building Rolls-Royces—any more than one can decide on Friday to build a Trident submarine, and on Monday to switch to hunter-killers. There are considerations such as tendering for an order from the Ministry of Defence, negotiating it, winning the contract, ordering materials and producing the design work. It takes a minimum of 18 months to two years before construction can start.

I pose to the hon. Members for Blaydon and for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) this question: what would the workers in Barrow's shipyards do on Monday morning if a Labour Government cancelled the fourth Trident on the previous Saturday? The answer is painfully obvious. They would have no alternative but to go to the local unemployment and benefits office to seek unemployment benefits.

Mr. McWilliam: The hon. Gentleman omitted to mention long-lead items that have already been ordered and paid for, and partially made as well. If the hon. Gentleman will listen carefully, I will say this slowly. If the contract penalty clause for the fourth submarine is the same as it was for the others, and if the cost of the long-lead items is taken into account, no Labour Cabinet would take the decision that the hon. Gentleman suggests has already been taken. He is misleading the House. No such decision has been taken and, from my knowledge of the contracts for the other three submarines, the likelihood of its ever being taken is very slim.

Mr. Franks: It is not I who is misleading the House, but the hon. Member for Blaydon. He has just heard with his own ears, as did every right hon. and hon. Member in the Chamber, Labour's official policy on the fourth submarine. Long-lead items also apply in respect of the hunter-killers, on whose construction he hopes the people of Barrow could be employed in the event of a Labour Government's being elected.

As most right hon. and hon. Members appreciate, my constituency is one of the most difficult to travel to in logistic terms. It is a six or seven-hour journey from my office in Westminster to my office in Barrow. I therefore apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, and the hon. Member for Clackmannan if I am not able to stay until the end of the debate. In those circumstances, I shall be more than happy to allow any right hon. or hon. Member—particularly from the Opposition Benches—to intervene. Within reason, I will gladly give way, so that right hon. and hon. Members may raise any points that occur to them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) should bear it in mind that a number of hon. Members have been waiting since the start of these proceedings to take part in the debate.

Mr. Franks: I am one of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I waited patiently for two and a quarter hours for this opportunity to speak.

This debate gives the House the first-ever opportunity to debate Labour's nuclear defence policy, in so far as it has one. There is nothing dishonourable about an individual or a political party, if they are genuine, choosing to change their minds and policies. However—and this is not meant to be a personal remark, because I sympathise in many ways with the hon. Member for Clackmannan—this morning we heard the hon. Gentleman espousing at the Dispatch Box a policy that he does not have his heart in, and he knew also, in advance, that he would have the greatest difficulty carrying his party with him.

That policy is based on a hope and a prayer that the general election will be delayed long enough to allow the Government to order the fourth submarine, which would get Labour off the hook.

I give the hon. Member for Clackmannan full marks, because, after innumerable debates on the Royal Navy and defence estimates, we have at last heard a crystal clear statement of Labour's policy. If I am wrong, the hon. Member for Clackmannan will correct me, but my understanding is that a Labour Government would not build the fourth Trident submarine unless the order was placed by a Conservative Government and there were clauses in the contract that compelled Labour to decide that for commercial—not military, social or economic—reasons it would have to allow the construction of that fourth submarine.

One can only construe from that policy and the speeches made by Labour Members this morning—they will be well noted in my constituency, if nowhere else—that the only party that can guarantee employment in my constituency in the foreseeable future is a Conservative Government, in placing an order for the fourth boat and, after the next general election, seeing it through. There is no other interpretation possible of the remarks of the hon. Member for Clackmannan.

Mr. McWilliam: Why does the hon. Gentleman encourage VSEL and its shop stewards to press the Government to export unemployment from Barrow to Tyneside and Clydeside, in attempting to win the type 23 follow-on orders?

Mr. Franks: As a member of the Defence Committee, the hon. Member knows that four shipyards build for the Ministry of Defence, but that there will be sufficient work for only two of them. Of those four shipyards, VSEL is by far the strongest, in terms of its finances, order book, and skills.

In the mid-1970s, VSEL was obliged, rightly, by British Shipbuilders to come out of warship building and to concentrate on submarine construction. If the future requirements for the submarine fleet are such that VSEL must widen its product base, it is only sensible for the company to do so and tender for type 23 orders.

I sympathise with the problems of the three other yards, but my responsibility as the Member of Parliament for Barrow and Furness is to look after my constituents. It is the responsibility of the Members of Parliament who represent the other shipyards to argue their own case.

Although we heard an unequivocal statement of Labour's official policy on nuclear defence and the Trident programme, the reality is that the party is peddling at least three policies, depending on the audience and which Labour Member is speaking.

First, there is Labour's official policy. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Clackmannan for making that policy crystal clear this morning, because he has saved me the necessity to quote what he said on 27 June, in a debate on the Navy. The hon. Gentleman has said, "We do not see the need for a fourth Trident submarine", and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said the same on 15 October, during a debate on the defence estimates.

Labour fought both the 1983 and the 1987 general elections on the unilateral programme that they had probably adopted long before that. They proposed not merely to negotiate away our nuclear deterrent—Trident—but to abandon it altogether. On both occasions, the party paid a heavy electoral price. It is understandable that, having received the message that the public do not like its policy, any political party should tend to experience a change of heart. What the public must then ask, however, is whether that change is genuine.

I have dealt with Labour's official policy; let us now leave the Front Bench, and concentrate on those in the rows behind. The majority of Labour Members belong to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. There is an almost endless list of quotations that I could use, but let me quote the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). In defence questions on Tuesday, he said that he regarded the cost of Trident as prohibitive.

Mr. Cryer: Why is this taking such a long time?

Mr. Franks: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman finds what I am saying so embarrassing, but I intend to continue to embarrass him, and all the members of CND, for as long as they choose to put their points of view. While conferring on themselves the right to put those points of view, they deny the same right to Members of Parliament who disagree with them.

Mr. O'Neill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has told us that he will have to be discourteous and leave early, because he has a train to catch. If he is so anxious to catch it, should he not make some progress with his speech?

Mr. Franks: I take it as a great compliment that Labour Members want me to complete my speech as quickly as possible, and thus get them off the hook. For the past five years, I have heard one after another say that Trident is only being built to save the seat of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness; and I have let it go. They should appreciate, however, that—if they are speaking the truth—Conservative Members apparently set some store by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness, and that, moreover, his constituents recognise that their Member of Parliament can deliver the goods.

What the hon. Member for Islington, North said on Tuesday was echoed by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), and again today by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). If he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will no doubt express his views far more eloquently than I can. He will argue the case against the Trident programme in its entirety. The Front-Bench policy is, "We will not build the fourth boat"; lurking on the Back Benches, however, is the majority that would cancel the whole programme, lock, stock and barrel.

Dr. Reid: I am sorry to interrupt, but this must go on the record—although I realise that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) does not want it to. The hon. Gentleman has just said that Labour's policy is, "We will not build the fourth boat." Let me repeat that that is not our policy. Labour sees no strategic need for the fourth boat; no one would make a final decision irrespective of costs, and the costs are not yet known. If Conservative Members release that information today, we shall make a decision within a week; while they continue to refuse to do so, we shall do what any responsible incoming Government would do.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are made at the expense of the rights of other hon. Members.

Mr. Franks: The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) is now suggesting that programmes depend not on strategic needs but on costs. Is that now Labour's official policy? The hon. Gentleman is saying one thing, while the hon. Member for Clackmannan sitting next to him on the Front Bench, says another. Will the two of them make up their minds, and present the House with a single policy?

Labour's third defence policy has apparently been enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition. I intervened on the hon. Member for Clackmannan earlier to confirm beyond doubt that what he was saying was official Labour party policy. Let me draw the House's attention to early-day motion 49, which is not in my name or that of any other Conservative Member, but in the name of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) and other members of the Scottish National party. Dated 31 October and entitled:

"Mr. Peter Mandelson, Labour and the Fourth Trident Submarine",

the motion states

"That this House, noting that the Labour leadership has, since its somersault on nuclear weapons, insisted that a Labour Government will have only a three boat Trident fleet; calls upon the Shadow Cabinet to explain why Mr. Peter Mandelson, on a visit to Barrow, told the North West Evening Mail on 15th August that 'all parts of the leadership are aware of the case for a fourth boat'."

That is very interesting. Mr. Peter Mandelson is currently a Labour party candidate in Hartlepool; he is also a

[Mr. Franks]

former campaign director for the Labour party machine. He is not just any individual; he is a person of some influence and consequence in the Labour party. It was following that comment, and those of the hon. Members for Clackmannan and for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 14 October about the SSNs—the nuclear-powered submarines with conventional weapons—that we were astonished to hear the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington say that the Labour party would abandon the fourth Trident submarine and also the SSNs. Instead, it would go for the SSKs—conventional submarines with conventional weapons. That has tremendously damaging prospects for employment in my constituency. *[Interruption.]* I know that the Opposition have not denied it; they cannot do so, as it is on the record. What is said in the House is, presumably, meant to be believed. What is said in Barrow by visiting Labour Members of Parliament and visiting Labour party dignitaries is equally meant to be believed.

Not surprisingly, at my advice bureau on Saturday 19 October representatives of the workers in the Barrow shipyards came to see me. They said, "We know what your party's policy is. You're going to build the fourth submarine. But what is the Labour party's policy?" I told them that I would go right to the top—that I would write on their behalf to the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). I did so on 23 October. So that I do not misquote, and am not misquoted, I shall read to the House my letter to the right hon. Member.

"On Saturday 29 October I received a visit at my surgery from workers who are employed at VSEL in Barrow. Their concern, as you will appreciate, is caused by the present uncertainty in the defence industry as a whole and in particular how their jobs would be affected by Labour party policy on the question of the fourth Trident submarine and the SSN programme. I was able to give them an assurance that under a Conservative Government the United Kingdom would continue to have an independent nuclear capacity, with all that that implies for future work in Barrow. However, in view of recent statements made both inside and outside Parliament by spokesmen of the Labour party, it is clear that there is now considerable doubt about your policy, and it is for that reason that I would ask you to clarify the position. As you know, the Labour shadow defence spokesman, Allan Rogers, said in the Defence Estimates on 15 October 1991 that 'Labour does not believe a fourth Trident boat is necessary. If, however, an order for one were placed before a general election, an incoming Labour Government would have to examine the contract and cancellation charges associated with it before making a decision'. And in respect of the SSNs, the nuclear-powered submarines with conventional weapons, your spokesman, Roland Boyes, said in the same debate: 'We cannot afford it and it is increasingly ill suited to our real security needs.' Outside Parliament, however, a different picture is being presented. Workers at VSEL are being led to believe that the Labour party is committed to the fourth Trident submarine and to the SSN programme—a clear contradiction of what your spokesmen are saying in Parliament. For the sake of all those in Barrow who want and need to know precisely where they stand, can I ask you to state your unequivocal position on this matter and"—

this is the crux—

"are you intent on building the fourth Trident submarine and are you intent on continuing the SSN programme? I look forward to hearing from you."

That is a straightforward letter. It asks two short, succinct questions. There can be no confusion. It ought to have elicited a lucid, clear statement from the leader of the Labour party—a would-be Prime Minister of this country.

You may be interested, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the reply that I eventually received. It was from someone called Neil Stewart, political and campaigns secretary. The letter is dated 12 November, three weeks after I wrote to the right hon. Member for Islwyn. It is a short letter, which again I shall quote for the sake of accuracy.

"Dear Mr. Franks, Mr. Kinnock has asked me to thank you for your letter and to reply on his behalf."

I am sure that my constituents will note that when their Member of Parliament writes direct to the Leader of the Opposition he cannot be bothered to reply himself but gets some lackey to do it for him.

"We have a first-class candidate in Barrow who is addressing the issues of the future of engineering and shipbuilding at Barrow far more realistically than the Conservative party, which appears to be inviting people to look at the past rather than face the future."

Hon. Members: Is there any more?

Mr. Franks: No, there is no more. The letter concludes

"Yours sincerely, Neil Stewart, Political and Campaigns Secretary."

You will not be surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have replied to that letter. I am sure that the House will be interested to know what I wrote in reply. Again, for the sake of accuracy, I shall read my reply. When I write to a parliamentary colleague I expect to receive a reply from him.

"Dear Neil, I acknowledge receipt of the letter dated 12th November from your political and campaigns secretary in reply to my letter addressed to you dated 23 October. As I doubt whether you have actually read my letter, and equally whether you have seen the reply, I am enclosing photocopies of both. My letter was very straightforward and asked two specific questions: 'Are you intent on building the fourth Trident submarine? Are you intent on continuing the SSN programme?' I should be grateful if you would now address your mind to these two specific questions and let me have a reply. I trust that this time you will have the courtesy to deal with this matter personally, since I am writing to you and not to your political and campaigns secretary. I await a reply."

In view of the clear statements that we have heard this morning from the hon. Member for Clackmannan, the shadow defence spokesman, I am sure that the leader of the Labour party will not wish to say anything other than what the hon. Member for Clackmannan told us. However, I have a little doubt. A few weeks after the defence estimates debate, four or five weeks ago, not surprisingly representatives of the Confederation of Shipbuilding Unions in Barrow, who are vitally concerned about employment prospects in Barrow following the enunciation of the Labour party's defence policy, came to London and met the leader of the Labour party who spent one hour with them. I understand that there was an agreed statement. However, the best efforts of my office, the BBC and X, Y and Z to get hold of a copy of that statement, have so far proved negative.

Following that meeting, the secretary of the Confederation of Shipbuilding Unions in Barrow returned to Barrow and said, via the local radio and the press, "We are fully convinced and satisfied that the fourth Trident submarine will be built." How does that square with what we have heard this morning? How is it possible that the Labour party's official policy is not to build the fourth Trident submarine, after union representatives from Barrow came to London to see the Leader of the Opposition, spent one hour with him and then felt able to say, "We are fully confident that the fourth boat will be built"? What did the leader of the Labour party tell the

unions that his representatives are not prepared to say in the House today? That is the third strand of Labour policy.

In Greek mythology, there is an animal called Cerberus—a three-headed dog that stood at the entrance to the underworld. We have a modern Cerberus under a different name—her Majesty's loyal Opposition, who have three heads and three different policies. For all we know, if a policy is necessary in the north-east, they will have a fourth policy, and if a policy is necessary in the south-west they will have a fifth. The Labour party will find a policy to suit the occasion.

Mr. McWilliam: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it in the rules of order that an hon. Member must rise in his place? The hon. Gentleman was speaking from the Gangway, which is out of order.

Mr. Franks: That point of order graphically shows how seriously the Labour party takes the subject.

I remind the House of the chilling but simple comments that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made a few weeks ago:

"If we changed our minds to win, we could change when we've won. What is wrong with that? We could not talk about nuclear disarmament because we might not win. But we have won so we can change back again. I mean, you can change one way, you can change the other."

Those words have a chilling honesty. There speaks the real voice of the Labour party: "Whatever is necessary to try to win the next election, we shall cut our cloth accordingly, but once we have won we shall show the real face of the Labour party."

Since 1983, I have asked one question many times in the House and in my constituency; nine years later, the question is still valid: if a Labour Government cancelled the Trident submarine over a weekend, what would the thousands of people who work in Barrow's shipyards do on the Monday? The blunt truth is that they would be thrown to the wolves, not only because Labour Members do not believe in the strategic value of the independent deterrent but because of the economic necessity to make cuts to pay for the innumerable promises that the Labour party has given one group after another. We all remember the TSR aircraft and the workers in Preston who were thrown out of work on a Monday morning. The same would happen in Barrow.

Mr. Corbyn: What has the hon. Gentleman been doing to promote the cause of arms conversion? What will he tell Barrow's workers after the contract for the fourth Trident submarine has been completed? Will he argue for a fifth, sixth or seventh submarine? Should not he be arguing for the enormous skill of the work force to be put to making peaceful products, such as ships and bulk carriers? Why is he so obsessed with the construction of nuclear weapons? They can result only in mass destruction.

Mr. Franks: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me an opportunity to remind the House of the Cumbria support scheme, which was mentioned on 13 June. Instead of my taking up the time of the House, he should look at the record. About £50 million of Government and private money is going to the local economy.

Mr. Corbyn: But £20 billion is being spent on Trident.

Mr. Franks: You have asked a direct question; I am giving a direct answer. If you do not want to listen——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Do not bring me into this.

Mr. Franks: I am sorry. If the hon. Member does not wish to listen, he should read the record.

To the Labour party, Barrow would be totally dispensable. It is not interested in Barrow, the Trident programme or nuclear-powered submarines. It is not even interested in defence.

No single issue can affect my constituency more than the fourth Trident submarine. The words of the hon. Member for Clackmannan will have been noted in my constituency. I fear for the future of my constituents if the Labour party gets its hands on the levers of power.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Unless speeches are briefer, some hon. Members will be disappointed. Long speeches are made at the expense of other hon. Members' rights.

12.25 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I shall do my best to observe what I understand to be an exhortation.

Since the foundation of NATO, nuclear weapons have been central to its strategy, but the doctrines under which those weapons have been deployed have changed in response to military and political change. The original doctrine of extended deterrence was replaced by flexible response. The recognition that nuclear weapons should be weapons of last resort has most recently been replaced by the doctrine of minimum deterrence. Minimum deterrence means deployment at a level which, if activated, would inflict unacceptable damage on an adversary. These are somewhat prosaic words to describe the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, but I believe that the House will know what they are meant to convey.

Minimum deterrence should be no less and no more than is necessary. It must be constant, in the sense that a potential adversary is forced always to take into account the existence of the deterrent. On one view, a part-time deterrent or an ineffective deterrent could be regarded as worse than no deterrent because it may persuade an adversary that he can take an unjustified risk. It may even tempt a potential adversary to take such a risk. It will create a climate of uncertainty about the effectiveness of the deterrent.

Those who say that the United Kingdom can and should have a minimum nuclear deterrent that is constant in the perception of an adversary, with only three submarines, must show, contrary to what appears to be the large mass of informed opinion, that three submarines can be so deployed that one is likely to be on station at all times. I do not regard such arguments as sufficiently convincing. It is not sufficient to say that a submarine could be put to sea in a period of tension, because nothing could be more calculated to raise tension than that very act.

I believe that four nuclear submarines are necessary to keep a constant deterrent, but there is a distinction to be drawn between a deterrent which is constant and the level of that deterrence. The word "minimum" can be used to describe the level of deterrence, but should not be used to justify anything other than a deterrent which is constant.

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

The essence of deterrence is uncertainty. Therefore, no one with any responsiblity for such matters should ever seek to answer the question, "In what circumstances would you be prepared to use nuclear weapons?" First, deterrence is created by uncertainty. Secondly, to say in what circumstances one might be prepared to use nuclear weapons is to invite a potential adversary to take advantage up to that point. As the essence of deterrence is uncertainty, statements or apparent commitments to no first use are, in effect, meaningless. It is theoretically an unenforceable contract, it is practically not binding and it could never be relied upon.

If one is concerned to reduce the possibility of nuclear exchange it would be far more effective to negotiate substantial reductions so that deterrence on all sides is truly at a minimum. In considering such matters one should not disregard the possibility of unilateral reductions. President Bush's initiative in the summer was precisely such a step. NATO's commitment to 80 per cent. reductions in sub-strategic weapons in Europe might be described similarly, but there is an important distinction between unilateral reduction in nuclear weapons and unilateral renunciation. It is clear—as much as anything is clear following the break-up of what we used to know as the Soviet Union—that there is so far little enthusiasm for unilateral renunciation on the part of Russia, Kazakhstan or the Ukraine.

What should the United Kingdom's attitude be to those issued against the background of the astonishing changes of recent times? First, as long as other nations hold nuclear weapons the United Kingdom will require the protection of a nuclear deterrent. That deterrent should be at a minimum level for the reasons that I have outlined. I also believe that if that deterrent is to be carried by submarines, we shall require sufficient boats to make it constant and, on the evidence available to me, I believe that four boats are necessary.

I am not persuaded by the case made by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) about employment. If the argument against four boats was compelling, one might have to accept the employment consequences which he fears so much. However, I have no doubt that the military and strategic justification is beyond question. There may be what he would regard as a favourable consequence as a result of a decision that the fourth boat should be built, but he cannot realistically expect that the employment reasons alone would be sufficient justification for proceeding with the fourth boat.

If the level of warheads on the existing Polaris system is currently providing a minimum deterrent, the D5 Trident system when deployed needs no more warheads than those on Polaris, which it is to replace. We could make that, at the point of deployment, our unilateral reduction. It would not prejudice our safety and would make a contribution to the belief—generally accepted by all parties—that there is a move among the major nuclear powers to an overall reduction in nuclear weapons.

At this point I part company in a substantial way with the Secretary of State. I see no justification—I choose my words with care—for the United Kingdom to deploy the tactical air-to-surface missile with a nuclear warhead. There might be a NATO case for it, but it is difficult to understand what is said to be the British case. The NATO case requires constant review. If flexible response has truly been abandoned, it is increasingly difficult to justify the tactical air-to-surface missile.

Questions must be asked following the dissolution of the Warsaw pact. For example, does there remain a need for such a system? Is not such a weapon, by being deployed on aircraft, vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike? With the conventional superiority of the Warsaw pact gone, is it necessary to deploy a tactical nuclear system to break up Soviet tank divisions that no longer constitute a threat? Following the experience in the Gulf, we should ask ourselves this: is not the destructive power of conventional weapons so incredible that the need to use tactical nuclear weapons has been obviated? Those are questions in relation to a NATO deployment.

Three or four weeks ago I listened, as a member of the North Atlantic Assembly, together with the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), to a senior Russian civilian official addressing the defence committee in Madrid. He said that it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that disaffected members of the Soviet military might be persuaded to sell nuclear weapons to terrorists. That is a staggering possibility and a consequence of the extraordinary collapse in the morale of Soviet forces and the extraordinary and difficult circumstances which have arisen because of the reduction—almost removal—of central control in the Soviet Union.

That risk, above all, argues for the need at the earliest possible stage to seek to eliminate nuclear weapon systems, such as strategic systems, by negotiation. The longer they exist, the more likely is the chilling possibility that someone disaffected in the Soviet military may seek to sell such weapons to some terrorist or terrorist group.

We in the United Kingdom know that the deployment of this system would have a large impact on the defence budget. Estimates vary between £1 billion and £3 billion. If we remain part of NATO, which is the policy of all parties in the House——

Mr. Douglas: No.

Mr. Campbell: With the possible exception of the Scottish National party. It will undoubtedly want to tell us why, in its new internationalism, it wishes to withdraw from NATO.

On the assumption that most parties in the House wish to remain in NATO, why is it necessary for the United Kingdom to have a capability of this kind, in addition to the United States capability? If there is to be more defence co-operation in Europe, why is it necessary for Britain to have its own capability, in addition to that of France?

It is notable that in recent weeks distinguished former senior military commanders in the United Kingdom have questioned the need for the deployment of TASM. I am thinking of General Sir John MacMillan and my distinguished constituent, General Sir David Young, with whom the Secretary of State has had many contacts in his present and previous responsibilities. It may be argued that they had a particular point to make about regiments and an anxiety to see funds spent not in one direction, but another. Nevertheless, the fact that senior commanders of such stature feel it possible to question something which, until now, has been an unchallenged assumption, should give the Government cause for concern.

I shall now say a word or two about what we should do, not just nationally, but internationally. We should do our

best to extend nuclear arms reduction beyond the United States and the Soviet Union. We need a more comprehensive strategic arms reduction programme. We need a programme that involves all five permanent members of the Security Council and those Russian republics to which the Secretary of State rightly referred in his opening remarks.

It is absolutely essential to ensure that, so long as the possibility of control or influence over the Russian republics remains, steps are taken to bring about a strategic arms reduction. One has only to envisage circumstances in which all those upon whose territory strategic arms are stationed are required to come to the negotiating table to consider such a proposition to realise how much more difficult it would be if all, rather than a limited number, were participating.

We must also pursue a comprehensive test ban treaty. We should respond favourably to Mr. Gorbachev's proposals for a moratorium on testing. There seems to be a notable division of opinion in the United States. The State Department appears to be in favour of that proposition, whereas the Defence Department is against it. Meanwhile, in Congress, a number of Democrats have introduced a nuclear testing moratorium Bill. I believe that it is in the interests not only of the United Kingdom but of the whole world that we should seek to pursue much more vigorously the possibility of a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing.

We must also pursue nuclear non-proliferation as vigorously as we can. Reference has already been made to the alarming evidence obtained by United Nations investigators in Iraq. The Secretary of State put before us a whole catalogue of countries that have ballistic missile capability, and a substantial number of them appear to have embarked on a nuclear weapons programme. All that argues for the vigorous pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation. It would be a strange irony indeed if, as Europe left behind it the threat of nuclear war, that threat were found to be arising elsewhere in the world.

In Europe, we want to create circumstances in which nuclear deterrence becomes less and less significant as the principles of common security are accepted and applied. Equally, however, it is in our interests to persuade the rest of the world that it does not need to acquire nuclear weapons to achieve peace. We shall best persuade it by the example that we set ourselves.

12.41 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The debate is timely for two reasons. First, it enables us to take stock of the further dramatic proposals to reduce the nuclear threat between east and west since the START agreement in July. Secondly, it enables us to take account of the knowledge that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, had Saddam Hussein not allowed his greed to overcome his stealth by invading Kuwait last year, he would almost certainly have developed a nuclear weapon by the end of 1993. Our priority must now be to consider anew not only the proliferation of nuclear weapons but how we can reverse that trend, which is so at odds with the end of the cold war.

Since 1987, the litany of successful treaties and agreements between east and west has been impressive. In addition, precipitated by the failure of the Kremlin coup, the Bush Administration, fully supported by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, have made significant additional unilateral reductions, all of which have been met by similar unilateral cuts by President Gorbachev and accompanied by the promise of further bilateral reductions to come. In Rome last month, the NATO summit agreed that the possibility of a nuclear war was now so remote that further substantial reductions in nuclear stockpiles can now be embarked upon.

The logical conclusion of all this is that there can no longer be a justification for the massive nuclear arsenals held by both sides, that only the absolute minimum of nuclear defence is required and that, because President Yeltsin, too, now has his finger on the nuclear button, we should now be doing business with him on this issue as on so many others.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, European security will not be complete, for any country, nuclear or otherwise, without the most foolproof means of defence against their delivery. That is why it is essential that we should continue to develop the space-based defence, which was once called the strategic defence initiative or SDI and is now referred to as "brilliant pebbles". President Reagan's 1983 offer to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union contained great foresight. It should now be renewed, perhaps within NATO's proposed North Atlantic Co-operation Council, with central and eastern Europe and what is now the Union of Sovereign States —formerly the Soviet Union. It would develop a Europewide shield to protect against attack from within and without as an essential piece of confidence building on our continent.

Although a nuclear threat seems inconceivable in this post-Communist, new world order of today, Saddam Hussein reminds us that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) said in the United States last week, human nature does not change. Thus, it remains essential to maintain adequate defences against such dictators and to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear arms.

That is why I support the call of several hon. Members who have taken part in this debate for new consideration of how to make the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty more effective. For nearly half a century, the world has learnt to live with the bomb. While the secret lay within the grasp of a few, there was never a great danger of a nuclear exchange—except for an accidental one. Both super-powers shared the instinct for self-preservation and negotiated continuously in search of credible systems of nuclear deterrents. Therefore, multilateral negotiations commenced to prevent the proliferation of non-civilian nuclear technology, and the culmination of those negotiations was the NPT.

The reality is that the NPT is not working. In addition to the five nations that admitted, under the treaty, to the possession of nuclear weapons, no fewer than 10 others have developed or are developing the bomb, and five of those are signatories to the NPT.

Since the exposure of Iraq as having consistently, to quote United Nations' reports, "obstructed and cheated on" divulging information on its nuclear programme, North Korea is now giving rise to the greatest concern, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said. As an NPT signatory, North Korea continues to violate flagrantly the IAEA safeguards by repeatedly denying inspectors access to its nuclear facilities. Recently, a

[Mr. David Atkinson]

high-ranking defector from North Korea informed western intelligence that his country is a mere 12 months away from producing a functional nuclear weapon.

Despite the imminent withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from South Korea, which fulfils the principal North Korean demand for the unobstructed inspection of its facilities, North Korea appears to remain committed to developing a weapon of its own. In so doing, it threatens to ignite a nuclear arms race in Asia that could prompt South Korea, Taiwan and Japan to develop nuclear arsenals.

It was reported in yesterday's press, however, that North Korea has now agreed to the principle of the nuclear-free Korean peninsula, although it has yet to confirm that it will open up its nuclear installations at Yongbyon and any underground sites to inspection.

The deputy Foreign Minister of Iran recently went to Paris to negotiate the transfer of enriched uranium from France. The Iranian Government—a signatory to the treaty—also seeks to acquire illegally nuclear technology from China. This month it was reported that Chinese officials and technicians are equipping an Iranian nuclear facility near the southern Iran-Iraq border in Khuzestan, with uranium-enriching technology.

While there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that Syria has been attempting to develop nuclear devices, it continues to purchase large quantities of heavy weapons and missiles from China and has illegally proscribed certain areas in Syria from IAEA inspection.

Other nations, which are not signatories to the treaty, are understood to be developing nuclear weapons. Therefore, they remain outside the treaty's remit and safeguards, weak though they may be.

India and Pakistan continue to develop their non-civilian nuclear capabilities, ignoring calls for their signatures to the NPT. India, which tested a weapon in 1974, continues to receive substantial foreign aid and has recently negotiated a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Perhaps western Governments should take a lead from the United States of America, which terminated its aid programme to Pakistan on the ground that it refuses to desist from non-civilian nuclear development.

Israel's nuclear policy poses a major dilemma for the process of non-proliferation. Because Israel did not detonate a weapon prior to 1967, but currently possesses nuclear weapons, it would be in violation of the treaty if it were a signatory to it and would be legally obliged to destroy its stockpile and to end its nuclear programme. Without selective disincentives such as the termination of foreign aid and trade concessions, Israel will not sign the NPT. Such disincentives should be applied if Israel's position does not change. To allow it to maintain the 300 nuclear weapons that it is currently estimated to hold—including 100 tactical weapons—can only provoke and encourage the Arab states' determination to obtain nuclear arsenals.

For many years the People's Republic of China has been one of the world's leading conventional arms and nuclear technology exporters. It has proliferated nuclear weapon technologies and heavy weaponry to Algeria, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and now to Iran. However, China has recently pledged to accede to the NPT and that must represent a welcome breakthrough, if it is serious.

Another welcome breakthrough is France's decision to sign the NPT last June. The Mitterrand Government also announced their plans for worldwide disarmament initiatives covering nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. However, France continues to conduct above-ground nuclear testing in the Pacific and remains the only nation to do so. That behaviour can no longer be acceptable.

The failure of IAEA safeguards, including twice-yearly inspections in Iraq for the pasts 15 years, must lead to the conclusion that the NPT has acted like a cloak of respectability to certain nations which have signed it. Instead of preventing proliferation, it has promoted it by allowing nations to protest innocence while violating the treaty's inadequate provisions. There can be no alternative now but to press for guaranteed and unrestricted verifications, backed up by tougher international penalties against violators and greater pressure on all nations to accede to the treaty.

There is probably a case for a fundamental review of the IAEA, with a change of venue from its Vienna headquarters. Perhaps the most appropriate nation that we could ask to accept the new headquarters of a strengthened and reformed IAEA is Japan, the one nation to have experienced a wartime nuclear attack.

Such an initiative would complement the United Nations arms register called for by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and such an international responsibility is one that I believe Japan would willingly accept, which is why I commend it to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

12.54 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall be brief, because many hon. Members want to join in the debate.

It was interesting yesterday, listening to the debate on the EEC, to hear many Conservative Members talking about eastern European countries joining the EEC, even though those Members belong to a party that is pointing missiles at those selfsame countries. It seems strange to extend the hand of friendship and economic co-operation to the same countries that we are threatening with mass extermination.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) in the course of an extremely lengthy spech did not answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Trident nuclear submarines, which only points up the fact that this nation needs a programme of conversion from arms manufacture to material for peaceful purposes.

The Secretary of State helpfully reminded us of the enormous changes and potential changes in the Soviet Union. I only wish that the House had listened to the present Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) 10 years ago when, in March 1981, in a highly prophetic speech against the views of his Tory colleagues, he said that far from being strong and a threat to the world, the Soviet Union was in the process of retreat and disintegration. It is a pity that I cannot read out that speech because time is so short.

If the hon. Gentleman's attitude had been noted and acted on, we should not have got on the treadmill of

nuclear arms escalation for the following 10 years. We could have reduced nuclear weaponry then, had we seen the Soviet Union in those terms. The Secretary of State's worries about the control of Soviet nuclear weapons, given the potential breakdown of the Soviet Union, would not then have been based on such mind-boggling perceived dangers.

During 1991 and after 10 years of negotiations, the START treaty was signed, and in itself it is indeed only a start as it still leaves enormous stockpiles of delivery systems and nuclear warheads, enough to reduce most of our planet to a radioactive cinder heap. So we cannot become complacent or leave START to do the job alone, because it is not enough by itself.

The Secretary of State mentioned that the number of sub-strategic nuclear weapons—START is concerned only with strategic nuclear weapons—are being reduced by NATO. That is a good step as we emerge from the cold war, but it is not enough. We must move on towards eradication.

The Secretary of State said that Trident was the ultimate guarantee of our security. It is worth remembering that only one boat in the tottering Polaris fleet is working; serious cracks in the cooling systems of the other boats are necessitating a great deal of expenditure and causing much anxiety to the Ministry of Defence. None the less, each Polaris boat carries more fire power than was used by both sides in the 1939-45 war. That shows how much damage could be wrought on parts of the planet.

The Secretary of State repeated several times that we need such a scale of weaponry to provide what he calls a credible deterrent. Whether Polaris is credible is a moot point, but we are now going ahead with the expenditure of £10,000 million on Trident.

I am one of those in the Labour party—I do not know whether I am in the majority in the parliamentary Labour party—who believe in unilateral disarmament. When the Secretary of State was enjoying himself for about 10 minutes claiming that a large number of us supported CND, he offered some rays of hope and sunshine that I had not seen for some months. I enjoyed that bit of his speech best of all, although I am not sure that that was what the right hon. Gentleman intended.

My views have not changed and I shall continue to attempt to persuade the majority of the Labour party to reassert its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. I know that some of my hon. Friends here are pleased at the policy change and, if it were changed back, they would use the democratic channels of the Labour party to argue their case.

The Labour party is a democratic one and I shall exert my influence, such as it is, to maintain the case that we do not need Trident. However, against the demagoguery of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness, it is important for us to make it clear that we do not intend creating unemployment through a change of policy, which means a more peaceful role for our Government. We are not the Government who have put 2 million people on the dole from our manufacturing industries in the past 10 years. We shall develop a phased and planned programme for the conversion of the means of war manufacture to peaceful production. It will mean changing swords into ploughshares. We will use the enormous reservoir of equipment and talent to provide the goods and services that the people of the world need and want. One thing is absolutely certain—no one needs the Trident system to be put into use.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) referred to the United Nations non-proliferation treaty. The Labour party strongly endorses that treaty. The Government are a signatory and supporter of that treaty, as will be the next Labour Government. That means that if they continue with Trident they, too, would be in breach of clauses 1 and 6 of that treaty.

Some signatories have breached that contract, one notorious example is Iraq. Everyone is extremely pleased at the scrupulous way in which inspection is being carried out in Iraq to reveal the scale of the investment in nuclear weapons. No one dissents from the purpose of that inspection.

At several review conferences the 138 non-nuclear signatories to the UN non-proliferation treaty have always made the point that the nuclear signatories, particularly the United Kingdom, are in breach of that treaty. They tell us that we should not manufacture and deploy nuclear weapons. We have signed a treaty to agree to that, but we have not just retained Polaris, with its enormous fire-power; we have now decided to go on to Trident that has even greater firepower than Polaris.

It is hardly surprising that a tiny minority of the signatories are now beginning to say, "We will not do what the treaty calls upon us to do; we will do what the United Kingdom does." We pay lip service to that treaty and breach it by spending £10,000 million on Trident nuclear submarines that carry nuclear weapons. It is difficult for the Government to criticise those signatories.

I hope that the verification procedures under the UN non-proliferation treaty will be improved so that inspectors will come here and point out how the United Kingdom Government are breaching that treaty. We should be told that we must stop the Trident programme, because that is the proper way of doing things.

Only yesterday a delegation from the Manufacturing Science Finance Union, MSF, came to the House to express its concern about big organisations, such as GEC, which have significant defence contracts. My hon Friend for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was there. The shop stewards said that, as a result of the rundown in defence expenditure, they were concerned that there would be redundancies under the Government's existing programme. That re-emphasises the fact that we cannot simply talk about cancelling Trident. We are not talking only about Trident, but about a whole range of defence activities that are being curtailed and on which expenditure is being cut. We must have a planned programme of conversion.

The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Sutton, is present on the Treasury Bench. I am reminded that when I suggested that the £7 billion of expenditure on the European fighter aircraft might be better spent—it seems dodgy anyhow—or used for civilian aircraft, his contribution to planned change was to suggest that nobody wants single-seater civilian aircraft flying at 750 mph. A few Tory Members laughed heartily at the right hon. Gentleman's contribution to our understanding, but the reality is that if the European fighter aircraft programme falls through, there will be redundancies

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

among the most skilled sector of our manufacturing work force. The Government must face that reality. A planned conversion programme is vital.

Finally, behind all the arguments about tactics and the programme for the deployment of Trident lies the issue of the morality of the possession of nuclear weapons. Mercifully, the vast majority of the world's nations have said no to nuclear weapons. In so doing, they have decided not to spend massive resources on the production of those weapons of fearsome levels of extermination. The Brandt commission "Programme for Survival—North versus South" produced figures in 1980 showing that just half a day's military expenditure would suffice to finance the World Health Organisation's malaria eradication programme. Even less money would be needed to counter river blindness, which is still the scourge of millions. The cost of one jet fighter, which was then $20 million would set up about 40,000 village pharmacists. One half of 1 per cent. of one year's world military expenditure would pay for all the farm equipment needed to increase food production and to approach self-sufficiency in the food-deficit, low-income countries by 1990. That opportunity has passed. The figures are out of date, but the example is telling. We should be using the £10,000 million that is spent on Trident to create jobs in the United Kingdom and to improve our national health service. However, we could also improve the lives of the people of the poorest countries where life expectancy is only 25 to 40 years.

Morally, that is a vastly superior case to the one produced by the Government—and, alas, supported to some degree by the Opposition Front Bench—who say that we should fritter our resources so massively on something that we could never use. Indeed, if we were to use it, we would destroy our planet. We should note the example of the vast majority of nations, including Canada, which has a Conservative regime, but which has said no to nuclear weapons. Why can we not go down the same road?

1.8 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I am delighted to participate in today's debate on nuclear weapons policy, but am saddened to see that the so-called "party of defence", the party of government, can muster only one noble Member to speak. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Atkinson) must have stumbled into the debate without having been nobbled by his Whips, because he gave a reasonable, rational and consensus-seeking speech, unlike the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), who gave the House his next election address for 37 minutes, but then proceeded to disappear, as though he is the only hon. Member with a constituency outside central London. Many hon. Members who are now in the Chamber have longer distances to travel.

As I said, it is a pleasure to speak in the debate, despite the rhetoric and the attempt to whip up the masses outside the House by saying that the Labour party comprises anti-patriotic pacifists. No doubt one could find some of that ilk in the Labour party, but I am sorry to tell Ministers, who greatly outnumber their indians seated behind them, that defence will not figure prominently in the next general election. Labour is not presenting itself for slaughter, as it did in 1983 and to a lesser extent in 1987.

Those drawers in Conservative party headquarters marked "Labour and defence" will be opened and their contents taken out to try to undermine Labour at the next general election, but such aspirations will remain unrealised. Labour has learnt the lessons of the past. They are that the public expect Britain to be defended and want Labour to be what it has been for most of its history—a party prepared to provide resources commensurate with defending this country.

When Clement Attlee became Prime Minister in 1945, he was no enthusiast of atomic weapons, but that programme proceeded. When Harold Wilson came to office, one Polaris submarine was cancelled, but the programme continued and Labour sought a consensus with other political parties and played an enormous role in NATO.

Between 1980 and 1987-88, there was a rapid flight from consensus to the outer shores of realism, but it has still prevailed—not just for electoral purposes, but because the world has changed. Most of the people responsible for Labour's policies acknowledge that those which may have been relevant in the 1980s were disastrous and should be consigned to the rubbish heap.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that he is in the minority. I was once in that position, together with my former colleague the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who is now a member of the Scottish National party. In those days he earnestly supported nuclear weapons. The people who were once a minority in the Labour party now represent the views of the majority.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness did not answer my question about what would be left to build in Barrow if the fourth Trident submarine were taken away. Perhaps he will tell his constituents and Government that the submarine-building programme is near to collapse.

An innocent bystander listening to the speeches of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness and others might imagine that the Conservatives are the exponents of the Royal Navy. I have with me the defence White Paper produced by the Labour Government in 1979. The section on frigates and destroyers put their number at 65. The present Government promised about 50, which we all took to mean 46 or 47. A year ago, we were told that the number would be 40, which we all know meant 36 or 37 frigates and destroyers, or even fewer. How can the Conservatives make such eloquent speeches about the Royal Navy when, in their 13 years in office, they have, according to their own planning, halved that part of its fleet?

Government Members argue that today's Royal Navy is more modern than in 1978 or 1979. A recent parliamentary answer that drew on the Government's own resources revealed that the Royal Navy was more modern in 1979 than it is in 1991. We should dispel the myth that the Conservative party is the party of defence and that Labour is the party of surrender—as shown on a brilliant poster in the 1987 general election campaign which depicted Labour's defence policy as a soldier with his hands in the air in surrender.

There is no need for Labour to be ashamed of its defence record, although the Conservative document "Britain's Defence: Unsafe in Labour's hands" gives the impression that a Labour Government would destroy the

Navy, devastate the Army and demolish the Royal Air Force. As reports from the Select Committee on Defence have made clear over the past few years, defence cuts are proceeding at such a pace that, if a future Labour Government continued in the same way, we would be left with Securicor and Group 4 to defend our shores and a steamship company to provide us with a substitute for the Royal Navy.

This scurrilous Tory document—approved by the Secretary of State—talks of Labour's contempt for defence, and its

"inherent aversion to strong defence".

What have the ghosts of the Labour party of 1914 to say about that—the men who joined the wartime coalition? Men who, weeks before the invasion of Belgium, might have joined a peace rally signed up immediately after it. With the exception of Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie and one or two others who opposed it honourably, the Labour party overwhelmingly endorsed the war effort.

In July 1914. Keir Hardie told the House, "They may not listen to me here, but they will listen to me in my constituency." He was mortified by the singing of English patriotic songs, led by a Labour Member of Parliament. When he went back to his constituency he was shouted down at a meeting, because the majority of Labour voters found his pacifism unacceptable. The chairman of the meeting told a journalist, "I am a Britisher first and a socialist second."

That epitomises Labour's attitude. So Labour is inherently opposed to defence: tell that to the ghosts of Ernie Bevin, Clement Attlee and the Labour Members who joined the coalition in 1940 and sustained our defence after the second world war. It is both impertinent and immoral to portray the party in such a light. The speech delivered a year ago to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition constituted the strongest defence of NATO that I have heard for many years—much stronger than that presented by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who seems to think that NATO has passed its sell-date and should be supplanted by some other arrangement.

We have heard today that a Labour Government would have signed up to all the NATO documentation. That removes yet another plank of the Tories' failing policy —their castigation of Labour for being unpatriotic. Profound changes have, of course, been made, but this is the party which, a year ago, succeeded not only in dumping its leader but in expunging her from its collective memory; the party that abandoned the poll tax, the flagship of its 1987 election campaign; the party that is flip-flopping on Europe. It is a bit rich for a party that has performed such cartwheels to accuse Labour of ambiguity.

Let me now raise a matter that I had not intended to raise until the Secretary of State introduced a knockabout element to the debate. It is best not to compare the present Government with the Labour Opposition of 1980-87: the result of that would be game, set and match. One can compare the Government's proposals with the Labour party's proposals and, better still, the Government's record with that of the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979. In 1979-80, 4·5 per cent. of gross domestic product was devoted to defence. In 1991-92, 3·8 per cent. of GDP is devoted to defence. In 1993-94 that will go down to 3·4 per cent.

People may say, "Circumstances have changed", but one could return to the time before the cold war ended and see that the Treasury had got hold of the throats of Defence Ministers even before Gorbachev came along and rescued the Government and the Treasury from their policies. The Government abandoned their commitment to increase defence expenditure by 3 per cent. a long time before the cold war ended. The Government's defence expenditure record is not very good. According to NATO statistics, defence expenditure, as a percentage of gross domestic product, was 4·9 per cent. between 1975 and 1979. It is now 4·6 per cent. The party of defence is spending much less on defence.

This scurrilous document talks about the Labour party scuppering the Army, but can we really be defended by 38 infantry battalions, half of which will be committed to Northern Ireland? If the IRA played it clever and exploited that fact, where should we find the troops for the much-vaunted rapid reaction corps? Half of them will be double hatted; they will be committed to Northern Ireland.

Conservatives will find little comfort from the Labour party's defence policies at the next election, which is not the sole criterion by which to judge them. We have signed up for the NATO summit. The Labour party is committed to maintaining nuclear weapons until other countries dispose of theirs. As a realist, I do not believe that that will happen fairly soon, or ever. I am anxious not about the defence policies of the Labour party but about the defence policies of the Conservative party. Shall we be able to sustain a viable defence posture if only just over 3 per cent. per annum is devoted to defence? Will the defence cuts be even deeper? The heat at the next election will be directed not at my party but at the Conservative party. Government supporters will be fighting for their lives.

Defence contractors, those who work in the defence sector, Territorial Army members whose numbers are going down and the men and women in the armed forces, with families and dependants, should be worried about the Conservative party's policies. The Secretary of State tries to point at us the finger of doubt, but I suspect that in the final analysis it will not be the Labour party's defence policy that will be seen to be wanting; it will be the "party of defence's" policy. I cannot wait for the British public to reach a decision about that.

1.23 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not intend to echo what was said by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), who is something of a military historian. I shall deal with matters historical, but not from the same viewpoint.

Reference has been made to speeches that I have made, both in the House and elsewhere. I was one of the 69 Members of Parliament who voted on 28 October 1971 for the White Paper presented by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) on behalf of the then Government. I was cast as a pro-European and suffered for my sins at the 1974 election by losing the constituency that is now represented by the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). My pro-European stance pales into insignificance compared with that of the Labour party today. It will swallow almost anything that Europe has to offer.

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

I challenge any hon. Member who has known me for more than five or 10 years to examine my political career and state when I did not make it clear exactly where I stood on major issues. I made it plain at the 1983 and 1987 elections exactly where I stood on defence. I remember attending a meeting before the 1987 election where the current leader of the Labour party suggested that Polaris might be decommissioned in a fortnight. I said that a good engineer would not suggest that.

The significant change relates to the obsolescence of Polaris. It offered the Government a unique opportunity to say, "We can no longer argue that we have an independent strategic nuclear deterrent." That was the time to stop our vain posturing on the international stage.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan said that we should listen to our constituents. He and I represent Scottish constituencies. Some Labour Members say that they have a mandate from the Scottish people but the Tories do not—that the Labour party has a mandate to decommission Polaris and not to proceed with Trident. That is the hon. Gentleman's remit; it is also mine.

I should like to consider the history not of the 1980s but of the 1940s. As a good Scottish Presbyterian should, I shall quote Bernard Brodie's work, "The Absolute Weapon":

"Everything about the atomic bomb is overshadowed by the twin facts that it exists and its destructive power is fantastically great."

Nuclear weapons are no longer in the possession of one nation. There are three options. One can recognise their destructive power and say that total war is absolute folly and that no one will embark on it. One can say, "We do not have adequate defences against it; let us adopt a first strike capability." Thirdly, one can deny the efficacy of a first-strike capability and opt for intermediate battlefield weapons.

It is four and a half decades since the first atomic bomb was dropped. Nations have wanted to become strategic nuclear powers. The United Kingdom's ability to do so relies on the United States. There is no such thing as an independent United Kingdom strategic deterrent. I make that point forcefully, particularly to the Labour party, in relation to when Trident comes into service. It will not be in service until mid-1994. That would mean that a Labour Government coming into office in 1992 would have to take a decision in mid to late-1993 to sail the first Vanguard to King's Bay and say, "Please can we have our 16 D5s?" Is that credible? How will they manage that? I challenge Labour Members of Parliament who are honourable gentlemen—and I especially challenge Scottish Members of Parliament—if they are still members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and are still opposed to Trident to include that information in their election addresses and make it clear for what they are seeking a mandate. Otherwise, they should make it clear how they support contemporary Labour party policy. The Labour party's approach, if it won the next election, must be considered.

It has been suggested—and not refuted—that Polaris is obsolescent, if not obsolete. There has been no refutation of the view that Polaris means having one boat in service at sea all the time. The problems of the reactors are well known.

I refer to what the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said. We could argue about the number of warheads that Trident would have, but one D5 missile has the TNT power of all the weapons that were used by all the belligerents of the second world war. In addition, it has much greater accuracy and hard target capability to penetrate, particularly the Soviet defence. However, we know what is happening in the Soviet Union. Is it realistic to suggest that the United Kingdom will wish to possess a so-called viable strategic nuclear deterrent with the objective of penetrating targets in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union? Is that what the Government are suggesting? If not, what other conceivable purpose do they have in mind?

The Secretary of State rightly gave a trailer about what has been happening in NATO and its decision to reduce its dependence on short-range weapons. The decision to reduce them by 80 per cent. is welcome. Although the Government have suggested that they want some tactical nuclear weapons for development in the not-too-distant future, the major Opposition rejects the need for that.

We are moving into a world in which everyone wants to see a reduction in tension. I belong to a party which does not want Trident or a strategic nuclear force on our soil in any shape or form. I admit that that exposes us to certain difficulties with regard to employment. In the 1980s I argued that we should examine the conversion procedures. One cannot possibly have an adequate conversion process and adequate conventional forces and also have Trident within realistic defence expenditure constraints.

I hope that I am not misinterpreting what the hon. Member for Walsall, South said, but he gave the impression that were he the Secretary of State for Defence, we should have both—an enhanced conventional capability of about 40 or 50 surplus frigates and destroyers and Trident, too. That is not possible within the constraints of defence expenditure.

There are particular points that I want to make about the Scottish scene. Having argued that the desire to continue with the strategic deterrent distorts defence expenditure generally, let me come to the specific problem of the Navy and its back-up facilities.

On 2 November 1991 *Jane's Defence Weekly* published a country survey of the United Kingdom. The naval part was written by Mr. Paul Beaver, the periodical's publisher, who is an acknowledged authority on submarines and submarine warfare. He asserted:

"The reduction in the number of UK warships indicates an obvious need to close another naval base."

In assessing the probable course of events it is suggested that Portsmouth is "invulnerable", leaving both Rosyth and Devonport on the vulnerable list. We in the SNP argue that for offshore and fishery protection purposes Scotland needs to retain Rosyth, albeit in the face of substantial cuts.

The article went on to deal with the submarine base at Faslane in strong terms:

"There is pressure to close the Faslane base, despite the investment at nearby Coulport for Trident and the adverse effect on local industry. In naval terms, there is a case for closing Faslane and deploying the SSN/SSBN squadrons to Devonport."

I know that a director of public relations in the Navy has refuted that, but I am convinced that pressure is building up in the Ministry of Defence to close Faslane.

I am giving the Minister, not the director of public relations, the opportunity today to give us an exact statement of the Government's future plans. It is important to make that clear. We do not want Trident in

any shape or form, yet the probability is that in the west of Scotland the submarine base will go, but the facility to arm the missiles with warheads will remain available at Coulport. To put it crudely, we would have the worst of all possible worlds.

We have had a wide and varied debate, but no one has mentioned space. It is clear from the Gulf war that the ability to knock out one's opponent's equipment depends on the command of space. What is the Government's programme on space and the satellite communications systems that are necessary there?

We in Scotland want a clear indication from the Government of their plans in relation to the bases, but we want nothing to do with Trident. An independent Scotland would say, "No" clearly to Trident. That is the policy that we in the SNP will put to the Scottish people at the general election.

1.38 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): It is a great pleasure to start a speech by congratulating other hon. Members. The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) was one of the most forceful and erudite that I have heard for a long time. I agreed with every word. I hope that it will not embarrass the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) if I say that his was one of the most thoughtful speeches on defence that I have heard from the Conservative Benches while I have I have been in this place. I shall enjoy reading it at length later.

I have a couple of questions to put to the Minister who will reply. If I could have his attention, it would be helpful. The Secretary of State talked about the safety of nuclear warheads on the territory of what used to be the Soviet Union and said that he was satisfied with the control mechanisms now in place, but was concerned about the disintegration of the morale of the custodian forces of those warheads.

Can the Minister give the House an estimate of the number of people whose collusion would be necessary for the effective illegitimate transfer of warheads to a recipient country in, say the middle east? If he cannot give me the answer now, I shall be perfectly happy to receive a letter from him. Clearly, it is not sufficient merely to put a warhead on the back of a truck and drive it to Syria or Iraq. How many people would be needed to make an effective transfer, which would naturally entail the possession of the codes and other physical factors?

The Secretary of State referred to the alarming number of countries that are now developing a missile technology. I was disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman had nothing whatever to say about the missile technology control regime. His Department should be examining that extremely important matter closely, and the Government ought to be doing everything in their power to strengthen that regime. Can the Minister tell the House how many of those countries—whose number appears from the debate to be indeterminate—possess now, or are likely to possess in the near future, missiles with a range that would enable them to reach United Kingdom territory?

My question for my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who is to wind up for the Opposition, relates to the number of Trident submarines that will be ordered. I confess that I was somewhat mystified by what my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said in his opening remarks. I fully understand his personal view that it is unnecessary to have more than three boats, but it is not a view which I share and I want to make it quite clear that, at the next general election, I shall be telling my constituents that the argument for four boats is unanswerable, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said. I am not clear that a statement exists anywhere in Labour party policy to the effect that a Labour Government would procure only three boats. If I am wrong, I shall be grateful to have the fact pointed out to me.

I support a TASM programme. One of the lessons of the Iraq war was that the future of air power must lie in stand-off capability. Conventional weapons certainly do great damage where there is no opposing air force. It is not in any way to diminish the bravery or skill of members of the allied air forces in the Gulf war to say that, after the first few days, the Iraqis were able to put only about four planes in the air. That is not a situation which we can confidently expect to encounter in other conflicts in that part of the world.

The debate has centred on nuclear weapons. I think that there is a far greater danger coming down the path towards the whole of mankind, and that is the danger of toxins and biological weapons. That is a far more serious matter. I am worried at the attitude that I understand Ministers are currently adopting, which is that we should concentrate first on chemical weapons—that we should try to get a treaty signed and only then worry about toxins and biological weapons. When I was at the Ministry of Defence—far too many years ago, I am afraid—the groups of weapons were discrete. There were chemical weapons in the middle, and there were toxins and then—way out—there were biological weapons. If I am correctly informed, the groups of weapons now represent a continuum and it is difficult to distinguish between the types of weapon at the lower end of the destructive scale and those with a destructive capability infinitely greater than that of nuclear weapons in terms of the amount that one has to deliver on a target. It is worrying that, apparently, Iraq has already been hard at work trying to develop a biological weapons capability.

It is significant that, although producing a chemical warfare capability takes only six weeks plus an average fertiliser factory, all one needs to produce biological weapons—if I am correctly informed by scientists of the utmost distinction—is a shed at the end of the garden. It is easy, the volumes are small and the ingredients are not difficult to obtain. It is a matter of the greatest concern to the whole of mankind, but we have not heard a word about it from the Secretary of State today. I hope that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will assure us that the Government and particularly the Ministry of Defence are looking closely at how to ensure that the spread of those weapons is controlled in future.

1.45 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): This debate has been amazing. The Government chose to initiate a debate on nuclear weapons but have failed to sustain the debate. It must be the first time that the Conservative party has failed to have enough speakers in such an important debate.

The speech of the Secretary of State was remarkable because, instead of seeking to inform us about some of the

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problems that the Government have created in our existing nuclear weapons system or answering many of the fears of those outside, he chose to remind us about the proliferating problems around the world, of which we are all aware. He offered no proposals to produce an effective non-proliferation treaty, but left that to Conservative Back-Benchers.

The right hon. Gentleman also attacked the Opposition for the fact that there has been considerable debate on this subject. I remind him that an essential element of defence policy is the protection of democracy, and that an essential element of democracy is debate. Of course there has been much debate among Opposition Members about nuclear weapons, but there has been a fair amount among Conservative Members. A Conservative Member pointed out that there is no universal enthusiasm for TASM among Conservative Members and argued that a few more regiments would be better than developing TASM. Although many other Conservative Members may not say that in Parliament, outside this place they do not question the fact that we could have saved more regiments, had we not had Trident.

I believe that the Government have acted in that way because they do not want to give detailed answers to the House about the existing problems with Polaris and the problems that will exist with Trident. It is time the Government came to the Dispatch Box and answered questions on those concerns.

There is an increasing number of television programmes and press articles about the problems with the Polaris boats. The Minister cannot come to the Dispatch Box and convince the House that the Polaris system will last until Trident takes over. He has increasing difficulty in telling us that the Trident programme is on time. Problems still exist at Aldermaston and with the rocket. The American Government have just agreed to provide extra money to try to solve the problem that the propulsion units contain highly flammable material and are very close to the warhead, creating a major safety worry. Difficulties are developing in the programme for fuelling the boats and in the cost of that programme. The Government should answer questions on those problems.

If the Government are so keen to go ahead with TASM, do they have the agreement of the German Government to the idea that a new nuclear system would be based on German soil? The Government have still not answered that question.

The Government should have discussed non-proliferation. It seems that they signed the existing non-proliferation treaty, then, like everyone else, broke it. To go ahead with Trident is a breach of that treaty. It is clear that the NPT was a face-saving device which everyone could sign and then ignore. I understand that it runs out in three years' time. It is now essential to develop a programme for an effective non-proliferation treaty which would take away the possibility of nuclear weapons getting into the hands of terrorists. The deterrent theory breaks down if one is dealing with people who are irrational.

If we want to ensure the world's safety for the next few years, it is essential that we have a non-proliferation treaty. As a first step towards that, we should commit ourselves unilaterally to giving up the testing of nuclear weapons. Clearly, if we continue to test them, others will want to do the same.

I make no secret of the fact that I have always supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The current problem is not the defence policy of the Labour party, but the fact that the Government have consistently tried to draw a smokescreen over their failure in the past 12 years to deliver the system that they have claimed or to look forward to achieving effective non-proliferation. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) that if we want a stable world in the future we are talking about more than just nuclear weapons.

1.50 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I agreed with almost everything that was said by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson). I am happy that he made large sections of my speech redundant by rightly focusing on the greatest and most immediate perils to the world at the moment, which are North Korea, Algeria and Syria. He also referred to the problem of China, which is feeding those other countries with nuclear technology, although that point had hitherto hardly been mentioned. The hon. Gentleman also focused on the important solutions—to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards, and to achieve effective non-proliferation treaties.

As there is now some mystery about the amazing shrinking list of countries with ballistic missiles, I should like to give the House the position yesterday, according to the Ministry of Defence. We know that 10 nations have now dumped their ballistic missiles in the sea in the past 24 hours, but the list that I was given yesterday is chilling. It includes Afghanistan, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Libya, the Netherlands, North Korea, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Syria, the USSR, the USA, the United Kingdom and the Yemen.

Instead of shrinking, that list has, in fact, grown, because the USSR now contains at least three independent nuclear republics. I do not accept the Government's view that that position will remain stable. I know those three republics well—I have had conversations with the presidents of the three Baltic republics—and although they are the most sophisticated republics, I can see a future in which those republics might become three Ulsters or Beiruts. However, other areas are far more volatile, such as Caucasus, Kazakhstan, the Ukraine and Byelorussia.

Over the years, there have been worrying events. The *International Herald Tribune* recently reported that it was revealed by India's ambassador to the United States, Mr. Abid Hussein, that Colonel Gaddafi had visited India in the 1970s to try to buy nuclear technology from its then Prime Minister, Mr. Moraji Desai. It was reported that he was prepared to pay £17 billion, which was the size of India's national debt at that time. We now know that India exploded a nuclear device in 1974.

I wonder whether Mr. Gaddafi is now thinking of going on a similar shopping expedition to the fragments of the Soviet Union where he will find many disaffected Soviet generals and groups, who are disconnected from the central power and control. What will we see when those republics, which have nuclear weapons, which are riven by

ethnic and religious divisions and which have been suppressed for generations, break out in a wholly unpredictable way? That is a terrifying proposition.

How accurate has the view of the House been? The Government display an air of infallibility and omnipotence this morning, but it has been depressing to hear so little attention being focused on the real problem that is facing us and which will continue to face us in the future, while so much is focused on yesterday's problems. The Conservative party continues to throw up all the old, tired political rhetoric, half-digested. It should have been excreted long ago and forgotten about. We must now face the immediate problem.

I have dug from *Hansard* some answers to hon. Members' questions about Iraq when, like Cassandra, we have voiced warnings about that country in the past four years. I could quote a whole host of them, but I shall read only one. On 19 April I asked the Government to initiate action at the International Atomic Energy Agency to strengthen its investigations into Iraq's nuclear weapons programme. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office replied:

"Iraq is a party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and as such has undertaken not to develop nuclear weapons. We expect Iraq to abide by her international obligations . . . We do not . . . envisage taking the specific action outlined by the hon. Member."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1990; Vol. 170, c. *1009*.]

The Government have told me that they will take that action now. As an international priority we should take up the practical suggestions made by the American Senator Mr. John Glenn to strengthen IAEA inspections.

Two years ago I asked how many nuclear installations Iraq had declared. I was told that it had declared one at Tuweitha. We know now that Iraq had dozens.

We are continuing tests in Nevada, thus giving the world the signal that we are strengthening our nuclear weapons and making them more deadly, while asking for non-proliferation throughout the world. The position is depressing. As time is extremely short, I shall end my speech by saying that the message that should go from the House today is that the world is in deadly peril because of nuclear proliferation, not from the developed to the third world but among third-world countries. A set of nations feel threatened, terrified and out of control. They have lost their old friends and allies and they possess nuclear weapons. Nations under the control of psychopathic butchers have nuclear weapons. As a threatened planet, we are stumbling blindfolded towards a nuclear abyss.

1.56 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament will be holding its annual conference tomorrow, under the title "Seize the Moment." The campaign is here to stay and will continue until nuclear weapons and the threat they pose have been eradicated.

Some members of the Labour party have consistently campaigned for disarmament and peace in the world. Many fought great and historic struggles for peace; they included Norman Angel, Konni Zilliacus and, more recently, Lord Fenner Brockway and Philip Noel Baker as well as many other historic figures who have stood for peace in the world.

Our debate today about the value of nuclear deterrents suggests that it is merely a question of exchanging a few figures and statistics, that we are talking of an unreal world somewhere else and we need not bother our heads about it. I remind hon. Members that nuclear weapons have been used in war once, in Japan in 1945 against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Each of those towns lost well over 60,000 people immediately in the fire storm that followed and thousands have since died as a result of cancers and leukaemias and are still dying today as a result.

Anyone who believes that nuclear weapons are a credible deterrent or have done anything to produce peace in the world is living in a fool's paradise. Anyone who uses nuclear weapons will probably not only kill the people at whom they are aimed but themselves as well. The idea that the nuclear arms race since 1945 has produced peace or stability is laughable. It produced economic chaos in the Soviet Union, which, as much as anything, is what probably led to its break-up, and it produced poverty in the rest of the world as the United States sucked the wealth out of the third world to pay for its arms race.

Now we are expected to believe that the development of the Trident submarine system is some sort of step towards peace. The Polaris fleet, when it is working, which is apparently a rarity, has four submarines. With a total of 128 warheads, Polaris can hit 48 targets. If four submarines are constructed, Trident will be able to hit 512 targets.

Mr. Alan Clark: Hear, hear.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister should be ashamed of himself. Where are the 512 targets? How many millions of people are threatened with death by these weapons? There are those who talk glibly about the number of bucks to get a bang—the language fondly used by United States generals—but they should think for a moment of the destructive power of these missiles. The total destructive power of the Trident system is the equivalent of 3,584 Hiroshima explosions.

Is it credible that in a world of poverty and environmental destruction we should consider spending more than £20 billion on a Trident submarine system? Some say that the British people want such a system so we must have it. The British people are not often told the truth about the costs, or about the consequences of the use or holding of nuclear weapons. They are not told that there may have to be a choice. Will a future Government continue or extend the Trident programme, or will they build new hospitals? Will they close schools to pay for Trident? Will they leave people sleeping on the streets of London to pay for it? Are we to refuse to help the poor of the world by writing off their debt and helping them to achieve a decent standard of living? Are we to do these things for the sake of nuclear madness?

We have had 40 years of mutually assured destruction. Now is not the time to continue the arms race or expand the quantity or firepower of nuclear weapons. Now is the time to look towards peace and disarmament and, above all, towards cancelling the Trident programme and ridding this country of nuclear weapons—and with them the implicit threat of nuclear weapons.

2.1 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): We rarely expect a full House on a Friday. It is not often an all-ticket game, but this afternoon I had to draw attention to the fact that only four Conservative Back Benchers were present. I did not interrupt later to point out that, by then, the number

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had fallen to one. So the party that called the debate, the self-proclaimed party of defence and patriotism, was reduced during a debate on what it regards as one of the most important electoral issues to one Back Bencher who had to plough a lonely furrow while deterring Opposition Members—a minimum deterrent if ever I saw one.

Despite the lack of numbers of Conservative Members, this has been an interesting and honest debate. Usually the Government eschew intellectual coherence in favour of rhetorical abuse. But the Secretary of State managed to avoid that for at least 70 per cent. of his speech, whereafter he launched into the usual McCarthyism. He spoke at length about the dangers of nuclear proliferation in the Soviet Union, the middle east and throughout the world because of the disintegration of states and the leakage of technology.

The right hon. Gentleman identified what he called the need for deterrence, an issue dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). What the right hon. Gentleman did not mention, symptomatic of the imbalanced mind which inhabits the Government, was the other side of the coin. If proliferation of nuclear technology and weapons is so dangerous, why did he have nothing to say about Government measures to stop global proliferation? He must have been somewhat surprised by the speeches of some Tory Back Benchers. The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) doubted whether we need the sort of air-to-surface missile that the Secretary of State is considering. That alone made his speech worth while, although it contained a great deal more. He suggested that Trident might be used as a sub-strategic system. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) pointed out what I would have said about that: the difficulty of knowing whether what is coming out of the chute of a Trident is a strategic or sub-strategic weapon.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), who had to rush off to catch his train, managed to demean his own argument. I understand the problems that would be caused by the loss of 4,000 jobs, which is what the hon. Gentleman fears if the Trident programme is cancelled or concluded. I know what that feels like, because, in the past nine months, my constituency has lost 4,000 jobs as a direct result of the privatisation of the steel industry, which was done by the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supports. I do not take the issue lightly, but the hon. Gentleman would be better served if he argued the strategic case for Trident rather than try to suggest that Trident is a job-creation scheme.

I do not necesarily agree with the strategic argument for the fourth Trident submarine, but that argument was advanced by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), the spokesman for the Liberal Democratic party, in an interesting and illuminating speech. What he had to say about minimum deterrents was particularly interesting. In common with other hon. Members and myself, the hon. and learned Gentleman asked whether Polaris is meant to be a minimum deterrent now. If so, how can the Secretary of State claim that the Trident system, which will have two and a half times the fire-power of Polaris, is the minimum deterrent? Either Trident is more than a minimum deterrent or Polaris is less than a minimum deterrent.

In common with other hon. Members, I found the speech of the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) good and extremely balanced. He spoke with tremendous pride, and with no irony, about the unilateral abandonment of certain classes of weapons that had been carried out by the Conservative party—not about those intended by the Labour party. However, for the past 10 years the Government have told us that unilateral action could not be considered under any circumstances.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East dealt effectively with the UN non-proliferation treaty, which was also raised by several other hon. Members, including, of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). My hon. Friend, with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), made his position clear. They would not expect me to agree with them, but they are entitled to argue their case. However, I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South said about the non-proliferation treaty.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said that he used to hold the minority view inside the Labour party before we changed our policy. The hon. Gentleman seems to like to swim against the tide, because, when we changed our policy to one that we thought was more rational, he immediately changed and became a unilateralist. I question not the hon. Gentleman's honesty, but the sense of his argument. The hon. Gentleman also demanded that Labour candidates should make their personal views public in their election manifesto, as though it was some sort of macho honesty system. I do not remember the hon. Gentleman making it plain in his manifesto that, if elected, he would not just change his policy but his party and still maintain his seat.

Mr. Douglas: I have never considered that the badge of a constituent Member of Parliament is necessarily a party badge. If the hon. Gentleman can prove in any way that I have departed from what I stood for in 1987, I will accept that. Can he show me how he still stands for what he stood for in 1987?

Dr. Reid: The people of Dunfermline, West may have voted exclusively for the candidate at the time called Dick Douglas rather than for the Labour party. I am not sufficiently lacking in modesty to think that my 23,500 majority is for John Reid. I think that that majority is at least in some way due to the fact that I am associated with the Labour party. However, we will let that matter stick to the wall.

I cannot cover all the issues raised, because of the shortage of time, and I apologise to those hon. Members whose arguments I have not addressed. The debate, despite the non-attendance of Conservative Back Benchers for much of it, is important because it rarely happens that any Government of any political hue are given the opportunity to play the leading role in a series of events of such consequence as the present process of nuclear arms de-escalation, which was set in train by President Gorbachev and President Reagan in 1987.

The Conservative Government do not believe that that process represents an opportunity to be grasped; rather it is a challenge to be avoided. Apparently, the Government, paralysed by fear at the speed and scale of events, have been enticed out of their mental bunker of the cold war only to bury their head in the sand to avoid the opportunities now available to stem nuclear proliferation.

There was criticism of Labour's past policy, the development of which was explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan, and of our commitment at one stage to independent action. I make no apologies for supporting that policy six or seven years ago. It was a tactic, not a principle—a means, not an end in itself. That distinction is one which some Conservatives seem genetically incapable of making. It was a perfectly legitimate, tactical means of contributing to breaking the nuclear log-jam in the circumstances of the early 1980s after four decades of failure, multilateral negotiations and nuclear escalation which led—despite all the rhetoric of politicians—to an increase in warheads from two in 1945 to 20,000 in 1985.

That log-jam has, thank God, been broken—which is largely why Labour's policy has changed. No credit for breaking the log-jam is due to the British Government. It must be a source of considerable embarrassment and irritation to them that one of the vital elements in that process was a series of independent—dare I say, unilateral—actions by President Bush and President Gorbachev, taken without any signing of treaties or formal advance agreement.

The Government's hollowness and hypocrisy are further exposed by their complete lack of leadership and any multilateral nuclear arms initiative. They seem intent on swimming against the tide of world events. The same Conservative Government who proudly proclaimed their adherence to multilateral reductions at a time when none was in prospect have left the field at precisely the moment when such agreements are being concluded.

Nothing should surprise us in that respect—even the absence of action. I was amazed when I read last week that as Yugoslavia was being split by civil war, the Russian federation was disintegrating, regimental restructuring was splitting the Cabinet, and a rethink of NATO strategy was under way, the Secretary of State personally took control of cutting the grass of the MOD's lawn. I suggest that stopping the escalation of nuclear technology and weapons is at least as important as protecting those green shoots at the front of the MOD.

There have been dramatic changes and a call for new thinking. I much regret that the Government are apparently incapable of new thinking. This morning, we heard about the WE177, the free-fall bomb, which will be cut by an unspecified number, the decision on Lance, and the statements that the Secretary of State made some weeks ago. They all boil down to the scrapping of two systems which we do not own, the storing of weapons that we cannot use and a reduction in the numbers of a type of bomb that we will no longer have the capacity to deploy. If the Secretary of State will excuse the colloquialism, big deal.

If one examines carefully the Secretary of State's announcements, one finds the indelible imprint, "Made in Washington." The rest was mere window dressing. Far from reducing the amount of arms, it is now escalating, because that is required by Trident.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) again raised the question of the fourth Trident. My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan was straightforward and honest. If Conservative Members cannot understand the position, I cannot make it any plainer. Any decision on procurement is a question of balancing the strategic and security need for the weapon or system with the cost. Any sensible Government will inevitably balance. My hon. Friend said—re-emphasising a Labour party statement of 1989—that we do not, on balance, see the strategic need for the fourth Trident.

We do not know—because the Government will not, for very good reasons, tell us—whether the penalty clause costs of cancelling Trident might be greater than allowing its construction to go ahead.

Mr. Tom King *indicated dissent*

Dr. Reid: The Secretary of State shakes his head.

Mr. Tom King: I am happy to give the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, because it is important. I assure him that he will save money if he does not proceed with the fourth boat.

Dr. Reid: Such a step has never been taken in the House before. That is new information, and I am glad to have been given it.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): It is inevitable.

Dr. Reid: I am not privy to the secrets of the Select Committee on Defence, still less to those of the Ministry of Defence; but I understand that, in some of the penalty clauses, the cost of cancellation was greater than the capital cost of the contract. If that is true, the hon. Gentleman will find that developments which, in theory, appear to be inevitable are not inevitable in the real world.

We do not see a strategic or security need for a fourth boat, but that does not mean that we shall not build one. We still do not possess the full facts in regard to the costs. Any Conservative Member who would make a decision irrespective of its financial implications is a fool.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: The hon. Gentleman is trying to wriggle out of it.

Dr. Reid: If the hon. Gentleman has not the mental capacity to understand, he must not assume that my wriggling is to blame; perhaps his own inadequacies are at fault.

I hope that we have now cleared up the question of the fourth Trident boat. I have to keep repeating things, because Conservative Members do not seem to grasp them. It seems that not all Conservative Back Benchers support TASM. Indeed, it remains to be seen whether they all support the fourth boat—especially if money spent on it could be spent on, for instance, regiments or frigates.

TASM has become a major macho symbol. In an earlier debate, Labour accused the Secretary of State of adopting a "Corporal Jones" attitude: he was the only man in Europe, we said, who volunteered for every engagement that was going on behalf of the British forces, sometimes before being asked. He is now suffering from "Bridge on the River Kwai" syndrome. Like the Alec Guinness character, he has become intoxicated with his own importance and has developed a nuclear weapons fetish.

All other considerations are undermined by the skewed set of values that sees nuclear weapons as an end rather than a means. The Secretary of State has not said a word today about the question of safety, for instance. Such values erode the willpower to pursue limitations on nuclear proliferation and promote the cavalier attitude towards nuclear test veterans, whose suffering continues. Not a word has been said about either matter.

Such values divert the Government from the task of diversifying arms production. Not a word has been said

[Dr. Reid]

about that either, except by a Conservative Back Bencher when prompted by one of my hon. Friends. Above all, they constrain the Government's will to achieve real advances in nuclear arms reduction, in an international context.

Let me repeat what was said earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). We have already outlined our position on nuclear deterrence as honestly as possible, despite the Conservatives' inability to grasp it; we have explained our position on the fourth Trident boat and on TASM. What we do not know is what the Government intend to do after the next election. They have clouded and cloaked most of their plans in the last refuge of scoundrels—the constant claim that they are the only patriots in the country.

I believe that that demeans not only the Conservatives, but the whole House. When the election comes, they will have a big surprise. The defence policy precedents set in the previous two elections will not be followed in the next. In my view, today's debate on nuclear weapons, although arranged by the Government, will assist us rather than them.

2.19 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we continue to face real risks. We have to accept that things are changing in the Soviet Union—certainly the intentions are changing—but the fact remains that the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal remains very large. As the whole future of the area becomes uncertain, it is only right that we should continue to have our own nuclear deterrents. We do not know what the future holds.

Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House referred to the fact that there is a new form of proliferation: that it is not just one state which now holds nuclear weapons, but that Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia all hold very large numbers of nuclear weapons. Many hon. Members, including the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), referred to the fact that disaffected military personnel may be selling nuclear weapons to terrorists. That is an alarming development which one hopes will not take place, but it is a possibility. Once again, it reinforces the need to keep our own forms of nuclear weapons.

I was glad to hear the hon. and learned Member say that he supports the concept that we should complete the building of Trident, and the fourth boat as well. However, his sound views on defence conflict totally with the farcical policies of his party, which has decided that defence should be cut by 50 per cent. It is difficult to see how one can reconcile cuts of 50 per cent. by the end of the decade with being able to complete any programme whatsoever. In the circumstances, he should be thinking about where he is going to find the savings rather than about what programmes he is going to complete.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the objective of the 50 per cent. cut by the year 2000 is subordinate to the need to provide a proper defence policy for the United Kingdom? That is my position. It is also the position of my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) who leads my party.

Mr. Hamilton: I find that an incomprehensible policy. I should have thought that it would be better to work out a defence policy and how much one can spend upon it rather than to start by saying that defence will be cut by 50 per cent. and then be subjected to a defence review.

Many hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), are concerned about the non-proliferation treaty and about other countries developing nuclear warheads and delivery systems. The non-proliferation treaty covers civil, military and nuclear technology, not ballistic missile systems. Its extension will be reviewed in 1995. We shall work for an indefinite extension of the treaty at that stage. The control of missile proliferation is through the missile technology control regime, to which the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) referred. We are using that, too.

Iraq signed the non-proliferation treaty. It was happy that there should be what was euphemistically described as a non-intrusive inspection regime. Iraq laid on a limited amount of nuclear materials that people could inspect when they visited Baghdad. We are now discovering that behind it lay a massive development programme that Iraq was not prepared to show to the inspectors. We are making some headway in Iraq. There is a veiled threat behind what the inspectors are doing in Iraq. In practice, the inspectors have occasionally been surrounded by armed men and prevented from going into buildings that they wanted to inspect. At that stage the Americans took a very tough line and referred the matter back to the United Nations. It is under a certain amount of definite international pressure that we are able to make progress in Iraq. I am not sure that I can see other nations agreeing to the intrusive inspection regimes that will be necessary to find all nuclear systems. Even with the intrusive system in Iraq, will we ever be satisfied that we have found all the problems?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: I know that the hon. Member wants to intervene, but I am afraid the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) went on for a long time, so I must move on.

Our nuclear programme supports more than 30,000 industrial jobs, 4,000 of which are on the submarine building programme at VSEL. The fourth Trident boat is important to them. If the Labour party does not think that there is any strategic need for the fourth boat, it will save money if it cancels. If the decision is made today not to proceed with the fourth boat, the savings will be £400 million. Cancellation costs after the contract was let would be based on the contractor's properly incurred costs at the time of termination. Any construction of the fourth boat would have to be paid for; any subsequent construction would be a saving. Obviously, long-order items must be taken into account. Substantial savings could be made on the construction of the fourth boat, but it must be remembered that we expect the boats to run for 25 to 30 years and that their running costs will be substantial. I am told that there would be at least two refits in that period, which cost about £100 million each.

I hope that the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) has cleared his mind on that issue. There is no financial reason whatsoever for not cancelling the fourth

boat. There are extremely good other reasons for not cancelling it, but he has ruled those out and said that he sees no rationale for it. The only thing that would stop him cancelling it is if he had to pay more money. That is not the position. He will make substantial savings in capital, running and refit costs. On that basis, we can assume that under a Labour Government there would be no fourth boat and that the workers at VSEL in Barrow would pay the price.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan tells us that Labour's policy has changed, that the Labour party is a broad church of pacifists and chapel-goers and that there has always been a minority who have not been terribly keen on nuclear weapons. Nobody accepts that nonsense. Whether it is the soft left, the hard left, Campaign, Militant or anybody else, most members of the Labour party have been anti-nuclear and still are today. In trying to win an election, it may make some sense to pretend that things have changed, but nobody in the country believes that.

I respect CND members. I do not agree with their views, but they strongly believe that we should not own nuclear weapons. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has some strong convictions. In October 1983, he said:

"There are no circumstances in which I would order or permit the firing of a nuclear weapon."

I believe that he meant that. He said he would never order the launch of any nuclear weapon,

"even in retaliation against nuclear attack",

that he

"would get rid of British nuclear weapons as soon as they could be dismantled"

and that

"The policy of the Labour party is that we do not have anybody else's nuclear bases in our waters or our soil. I support that policy."

Those are his devout beliefs.

At the last election the right hon. Gentleman came out with the outstanding remark that

"Afghanistan surely proves the point"

that an enemy occupation of a non-nuclear Britain would be untenable. I remember that because it was a moment of rather delightful humour. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) said, "What does he suggest? That we should all take to the hills?" It is significant that the right hon. Member for Islwyn was a paid-up member of CND on 12 May 1989—not long ago.

There was then an adjustment to the policy because it was realised that there would be great difficulties with the electorate. The right hon. Gentleman made the following extraordinary statement:

"Labour have at no stage made a commitment to get rid of all nuclear weapons for as long as others have them."

I think that Sir Winston Churchill would have described that as a terminological inexactitude as it completely contradicted what had been said in the Labour document, "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change", which said:

"Labour would immediately seek to place all of Britain's nuclear capability including Polaris and as much of Trident as had been completed into international disarmament negotiations. A Labour Government will reserve the option of initiating direct negotiations with the Soviet Union and/or with others in order to bring about the elimination of that capacity by negotiated and verifiable agreements."

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL

Ordered,

That the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with as if it had been certified by Mr. Speaker as relating exclusively to Scotland.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 12th July 1991, relating to the preliminary draft general budget of the European Communities for 1992, European Community Documents Nos. 7731/91, relating to the draft general budget of the European Communities for 1992, 7368/91, relating to the letter of amendment No.1/1992 to the preliminary draft general budget of the European Communities for 1992, and 8719/91, relating to the revision of the financial perspective for 1992, and the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 4th November 1991, relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the draft general budget of the European Communities for 1992, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Welsh Development Agency Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL

Ordered,

That, if the Welsh Development Agency Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that as soon as the proceedings on any Resolution come to by the House on Welsh Development Agency Bill *[Money]* have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Gateshead Students

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

2.31 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the motion for the Adjournment of the House in order to raise a matter that is causing me great concern—the number of cases in my constituency of considerable financial hardship being experienced by full-time and part-time students.

I believe that these instances of hardship arise as a direct consequence of a range of Government policies such as the introduction of the student loan scheme, the decision to exclude students from various social security benefits—for example, housing and unemployment benefits—the Government's attitude towards local authority financing with particular reference to local authority discretionary educational awards, the level of access funds that educational establishments have at their disposal and the problems relating to schemes such at the Government's career development loan scheme.

Many of the constituency cases with which I have dealt in recent months have especially worried me because they seem to show that the financial hardship now experienced by many students is especially severe for those who come from low-income families. That has led me to conclude that higher and further education no longer provide a pathway out of poverty towards educational achievement and self-fulfilment, because students from poor backgrounds may be forced to give up studying and never achieve the educational qualifications that they seek. Furthermore, there is great danger that people from such backgrounds will be deterred from applying for educational courses in the future. Having spoken to many of my parliamentary colleagues and having listened to debates and questions in the House, I believe that my experience in Gateshead is part of a national pattern.

I remind the Minister that Gateshead is far from being one of Britain's most prosperous towns. It has high unemployment and considerable long-term unemployment. In many ways families have never recovered from the earlier recession of the 1980s, let alone the current recession. Many young people in Gateshead have grown up in families in which it is very rare for someone to have a full-time, decent and well-paid job.

Gateshead has a large number of low-income families and has traditionally had a poor participation rate in further and higher education. That has improved in recent years and I congratulate the local authority and the local schools and colleges on that. Nevertheless, many people who might otherwise have gone on to Government employment schemes have been deterred from doing so because of the difficulty in finding jobs as a result of going on those schemes. They have then concluded that going on to further education or staying at school are better options.

To illustrate my point about student financial hardship in Gateshead, I shall refer to some specific cases, but in such a way as to protect the identity of my constituents. I shall refer to the first case as Mr. A. He wrote to me in March saying:

"I am writing in the hope that you may be able to give me some positive information regarding the money I am supposed to live on. I am a male of 49 years living on my own in rented accommodation, I spent a year on E.T. at the Gateshead National Garden Festival from 1989 to 1990 . . . that was alright, then last September 1990 and with the end of the festival in site . . . I had a dread of going back on the dole as I already spent seven years on the dole previously . . . through no-fault of my own. Any-way in September 1990 I decided to further my career in Horticulture and started a college course full time at Houghall College, County Durham, which meant having to live on a Educational-grant . . . My expenses weekly are £29 rent; bus fares to college £25, HP £10, electric £5 total £69 weekly this is without food. My grant allows me £60 weekly a difference of £9, I am now getting deeply in debt with my rent. I cannot get any help from Social Security or Rent Rebate. How am I supposed to live on this grant".

I sent the letter to the Department of Employment, among others, and received a reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, suggesting that my constituent should take out a career development loan. My constituent was reluctant to do that because he thought he would get further into debt. At that point he was already in dept. However, he made inquiries and was told by his bank that he was not eligible for such a loan because in the past he had received a Government grant. I forwarded that letter to the Department of Employment and got the unsatisfactory answer that it fully understood my constituent's position and his reluctance to consider a bank loan at this time, but was

"sorry in this instance not to be able to offer an alternative suggestion."

The conclusion of the story is even sadder. This week I spoke to my constituent. Having completed his course, he found that there were few vacancies for horticulturists and he is once again on the dole.

The next constituent case concerns Ms. B. She sent me a letter in September which she described as

"a heartfelt plea for fair dealing."

She commenced a two-year nursery nurse examination board course at Tyneside college in Wallsend. She was 27 at the time and not residing with her parents. She applied to Newcastle council for a grant as she was living in the Newcastle area. She was awarded £670 a year. That had to cover everything—all living and personal expenses, all college equipment and all travel expenses. She is living with a friendly family that she knows. Otherwise, her position would be impossible. Although the local authority was sympathetic to her problem, the sum of money available to it for discretionary grants had been severely cut in recent years, so it could not see its way to helping her further.

The next case concerns Mrs. C. She wrote to me about her student son and was greatly concerned about the plight of all students this summer due to the Government's changes in social security rules. She rightly notes that students are not entitled to any income support from the Department of Social Security during the summer vacation and she points to the real problems that exist in areas of high unemployment, such as Gateshead and on Tyneside in general, where students, whom the Government urge to take on part-time or full-time jobs during their vacation, simply do not find those jobs available. According to my constituent, simply applying for extra amounts in loans, either under the Government's student loans scheme or from the bank, defeats the object, because the students then get themselves further into debt.

My constituent concludes:

"The present government wants education standards to be improved but in the case of students, it will only result again in the 'rich' families being able to afford to send their children

on to further education. There will certainly be a choice but that choice will be 'money'—an elitist society. It will certainly not be a classless one."

The next case concerns a constituent whom I will call Mrs. D, who wrote to me about her two daughters, both of whom were studying in London—not entirely out of choice. One had come to London university to do a postgraduate music diploma because it was the most appropriate place for her to study. As we know, students in London have particular problems because of the high cost of accommodation. Students in London have suffered particularly badly because of the Government's decision to make students ineligible for housing benefit. My constituent felt strongly that neither the amount on offer from the student loans scheme nor the money available from the postgraduate access fund would be enough to compensate for the loss of housing benefit to her undergraduate daughter or to her elder daughter, who was on the postgraduate music course. I have since asked my constituent for an update of the position and she has confirmed that the family has had to put in a good deal more extra money to finance both daughters than it had previously expected. Fortunately, that family was able to put in extra money—although it meant some sacrifices, such as doing without holidays and so on—but I contend that if those two girls had come from a less fortunate background, they simply would not have been able to continue their courses in current circumstances.

My final case relates to two girls who live in a hostel that manages beds for single homeless girls, many of whom come there because of family breakdown or abuse. During the summer, both girls decided that they wanted to go to college to get some qualifications. One intended to go to Gateshead college full time for a year to do five GCSEs, but was unable to get a grant or income support because she did not qualify under the 22-hour rule and so reluctantly decided to attend part time instead. The other was doing a BTEC first diploma at Newcastle college. She could not get a grant or income support and had no option of going part time. Consequently, she had to exist on an average income of £26 per week from an evening waitressing job. According to the letter that I received, both girls have to find money for books, stationery and examination fees out of their meagre income. The letter concludes:

"it seems very unjust that young people who are determined to improve things for themselves after a bad start in life should be faced with such an uphill struggle."

Those are the only examples that I have time to cite today, but I could give several more from my constituency files. I believe that those cases represent the local tip of a large national iceberg. The Minister may be tempted to respond, as the Secretary of State did during education questions a week ago, by dismissing such allegations of hardship. I have received earlier dismissive replies from his Department and from the Departments of Employment and of Social Security. I hope, however, that I am wrong, and that the Minister's response to these specific cases will represent a considerable change of heart.

The Minister will no doubt refer to the availability of loans, and may well repeat the claim made in a letter by his predecessor:

"there is no evidence . . . that a . . . loan scheme has in practice had the effect of reducing participation by lower socio-economic groups."

Such evidence is now beginning to appear and I believe that my hon. Friends and I will be proved to have been right all along in our predictions of the effect of the student loan scheme.

The Minister may also refer to the discretionary grants from local education authorities. When I approached the Newcastle local education authority about one of the constituents to whom I have referred, I was told that the city council's budget for discretionary awards had been severely cut in recent years. I believe what the Newcastle local authority tells me, because I know only too well how Gateshead has been affected by Government cuts which the local authority has been forced to implement.

The Minister will probably also refer to availability to colleges and educational establishments of access funds to alleviate instances of hardship. This week I contacted Gateshead college and was told that the pressure on the access fund was such that the college could have spent its yearly entitlement by the end of the first week of the academic year. The college has had the heart-rending task of choosing between applications from equally deserving cases. I am worried that many students may convert to being part time rather than full time, simply because they cannot afford to be full-time students. Like many other colleges and educational establishments, Gateshead college is worried about that trend and thinks that it will increase in the future, particularly if nothing is done.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the case studies to which I referred highlight a serious problem. I hope that he will not take refuge in bland, average, countrywide statistics but will appreciate the painful reality behind those statistics.

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has asked the Government to undertake an urgent review of the situation. It is in an excellent position to understand the hardship experienced by many students and the gravity of the problem. Although the Minister's Department has refused to countenance such a review in the past, I beg him to think again and announce today that the Government will undertake the urgent review called for by the NACAB and many hon. Members. Unless action is taken to give colleges and local education authorities more funds and to channel Government money to hard-pressed students, the prospect for many students, not only in Gateshead but nationally, will be very bleak. Moreover, the Government will end their period of office with many blighted futures on their conscience.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) for providing the House with the opportunity to debate student support. She recently wrote to me and I am glad to be able to respond more fully now than was possible in correspondence. Many of her remarks today were about her constituents in Gateshead, but she also referred to the national picture.

There is an important distinction to be drawn at the outset in the support arrangements for students in further and higher education. In general, students who embark on full-time and sandwich courses at degree level are entitled to a mandatory award from their local education authority and can apply to the Student Loans Company for loans. All other students—those in further education, most of

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

those on part-time courses in higher education and most postgraduate students—do not have that entitlement. They can, however, apply for a discretionary award from their local education authority.

Let me deal first with students in full-time higher education. I believe that the Government have a good story to tell. We have made substantially more money available in maintenance support for students in higher education. The full-year loan and grant are now over 30 per cent. higher than the grant alone was two years ago. That is a generous increase by any standards. The increase for the current year has been 6 per cent. That compares very well with the current rate of inflation, which is now below 4 per cent. We have just announced that we will increase student support by 4½ per cent. for the 1992-93 academic year, thereby at least maintaining its value in real terms. Additional help is available from the access funds for those facing particular difficulties. Higher education students have the lion's share of the access funds, which are worth in total nearly £26 million this year.

Our restructuring of the support arrangements also means that students' maintenance costs are now shared more fairly between the students themselves, their parents and the taxpayer. Parents are paying less—their assessed contribution is frozen in cash terms if their income rises in line with average earnings. The same freezing of their assessed contribution benefits students' spouses, too.

Student loans are available to all eligible students who apply for them. The student loans scheme has proved a success. In its first year, more than 180,000 students took out loans worth some £70 million. The take-up is likely to be even higher this year; more than 83,000 students have already applied. The claim that loans would deter students from enrolling in higher education—also made by the hon. Lady—have proved misplaced. Quite the reverse is true—participation is increasing rapidly. Ten years ago, only one young person in eight entered higher education. It is now one in five. We expect it to be one in three by the year 2000.

Students have always looked for vacation work. While I accept that there may have been a little less temporary employment available during this summer than in previous years, there is no doubt that many students still found temporary jobs in the long vacation. There may also have been opportunities for paid work experience.

Ms. Quin: Has the Minister undertaken a regional survey of the number of students who managed to obtain temporary work during the summer? I am sure that there must be great variations not only from one part of the country to another, but from one town to another, because of the high levels of unemployment in certain places.

Mr. Howarth: I accept what the hon. Lady suggests, because clearly there have been regional differences in economic conditions. I hope that, in time, we shall be able to monitor what has actually been happening. We shall certainly try to monitor it with the best precision that we can but, at this stage, we do not have firm figures.

As we have heard, it has been claimed that there has been widespread hardship among students this summer. No one wants to see students forced to abandon their studies for financial reasons and no one wants to see students in hardship, but I do not believe that students are abandoning their studies for financial reasons. Preliminary reports from local education authorities do not suggest that students have abandoned their courses as a result of the changes that we have made. Last year the majority of students did not take up their loan facility. It was their decision to forgo that extra, publicly provided support.

There have been reports from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—the hon. Lady referred to the latter—but neither was convincing. The NACAB report involved only a small number of students who approached only one of about 60 bureaux. It was not clear from the report whether they had even applied for the available student loan or help from their college's access fund.

The access funds supplement the main package of student support and allow universities, polytechnics and colleges to give discretionary support where access to higher education might be inhibited by financial considerations or where they consider that students face real financial difficulties. The sum available for further and higher education students—nearly £26 million this year—is a substantial extra amount and, if allocations are properly targeted by institutions, should be adequate for its purpose. In general, they should not go to students who have not explored all other reasonable sources of finance.

Institutions administer the access funds under general guidelines provided by the Department. In the summer, we issued further guidance designed to improve the targeting of the funds. I hope that institutions have found the guidance useful this year. Earlier we dropped the requirement that up to 85 per cent. of the funds should be disbursed before the end of the financial year. For the long vacation we told institutions that they could anticipate up to 10 per cent. of this year's allocation if they wished to do so. We have made it as easy as possible for institutions to help students in genuine financial need within the resources available to them. Most institutions are also able to draw on hardship funds of their own, of course.

It is important to understand—this is too often misunderstood—that access funds are not intended to be a replacement for the social security benefits to which most students are no longer entitled.

Some play has been made of the fact that the Government withdrew the right to claim social security benefits from most full-time students. The House discussed that in an Adjournment debate last week. Our reforms have ended most students' need to rely on benefits, and it is better that that should be so.

The extra resources available from the uprated grant and loan more than compensate for what the majority of students could have claimed. In fact, many students claimed no benefits and, as I have already mentioned, the access funds enable institutions to provide discretionary support for those in need. I should emphasise that vulnerable groups of students, such as the disabled and lone parents, remain eligible for benefits. Students aged under 19 in further education have retained their entitlement to housing benefit in term-time if they are living away from their parents.

Ms. Quin: Does the Minister doubt the cases of hardship that I have quoted? What, if anything, can he do about them?

Mr. Howarth: I want to continue to develop my argument. I remind the hon. Lady that we are making more public support available to many more students than ever before. As I explained, we have increased publicly provided support for students in higher education by 30 per cent. compared to the period before the loans scheme was introduced. The fact that growing numbers of students are making the personal decision to go into higher education each year suggests strongly that our system of student support, far from providing a deterrent, is encouraging more people to go into higher education, who perhaps would not have had the confidence to do so or the belief that it is appropriate for them.

I have been most concerned by reports that some students may have been in temporary difficulty at the start of the current term because their grant cheques have not arrived from certain authorities. My Department has vigorously pursued reported delays with the authorities concerned. We have pressed them to make provisional payments where necessary, to ensure that students do not suffer hardship. I hope that local education authorities will have learnt some valuable lessons from this year's experience and that they will take great care to consider what contingency plans are needed to avoid being caught napping again by a late rush of applicants.

Without wishing to understate what was surely a trying time for some students, I shall make two further points. First, reports reaching me indicate that many of those LEAs that were not coping have now cleared their backlogs. Secondly, most LEAs, including Gateshead, coped well with the record number of applications they received. That fact should not go unremarked.

I have dealt at some length with the arrangements for mandatory support because they have been in the limelight recently and because they are the direct responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. As to the arrangements for discretionary support, they are essentially for the 116 local education authorities in England and Wales to decide. They have discretionary power to support students in further or higher education, including those who study part time.

The Education Act 1962 currently limits mandatory grant support to full-time first degree and comparable courses. We could put primary legislation before Parliament to change that, of course, but we would need to consider the substantial cost to the taxpayer. We could extend student loans to part timers in higher education without primary legislation and have not ruled out doing so, but again, cost is a factor. The available figures do not suggest that either part-time students in higher education or full-time ones in further education are deterred by lack of mandatory funding; on the contrary, demand is buoyant.

It is also worth bearing it in mind that, under the so-called 21-hour rule, young people can study part time for up to 21 hours a week without affecting their entitlement to social security benefits. The rule is designed to help the genuinely unemployed to use their time constructively. It is not intended as a source of support for the committed student. In order to qualify, therefore, the young person must be prepared to give up his course if a suitable job opportunity is offered.

Press reports that local education authorities have cut back drastically on, or have even stopped making, discretionary awards have rather exaggerated the position. Certain LEAs do indeed seem to have reduced their overall awards budgets this year, but most are continuing to grant awards at about the same levels as in previous years.

Hon. Members must recall that these are, after all, discretionary awards. Ministers do not seek to influence LEAs' decisions or policies on them: they would cease to be discretionary if we did.

Within the national funding framework, it is for each local education authority to set its own education budget, and to decide how to allocate it between the various elements of the service, including discretionary awards. If particular LEAs see fit to alter their priorities and redeploy funds from one area to another, that is their decision. There is undoubtedly room to make savings and improve efficiency within education spending, and we are anxious that LEAs should do so. But in considering where economies may best be made, they must, of course, take account of the likely effect on pupils and students. A policy of "no awards come what may" is not a reasonable policy —it is something which no reasonable LEA would do. Nor should there be any need for such a policy in any properly managed authority.

It has been suggested that, in some way, Government funding—or the lack of it—has forced LEAs to cut back drastically. I cannot accept that. The 1991-92 local authority finance settlement allowed for authorities in England to spend almost £17·5 billion on education, which is a 16 per cent. increase over the 1990-91 settlement. This is a very considerable increase, well in excess of the rate of inflation.

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 25 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Bus Deregulation

1. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the deregulation of buses in London.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): May I, on behalf of my colleagues, and the House, wish you, Mr. Speaker, a very happy birthday?

The Government intend to deregulate bus services in London and privatise London Buses Limited as soon as possible in the next Parliament. Free and fair competition is the best way to ensure that bus services are tailored to the needs of passengers.

Mr. Fraser: Does the Minister acknowledge that even London Transport is alarmed at the way in which—*[Interruption.]* I use its words—the Government are handling, the deregulation? That alarm is shared by those who believe that deregulation will cause traffic chaos and will put in jeopardy concessionary fares and the travelcard scheme. Why does not the Minister abandon his ideological obsession with breaking up the London bus service and get on with the job of getting transport moving in London?

Mr. Freeman: I do not recognise the facts as the hon. Gentleman has presented them. First, the senior management of London Transport and the operators of the London bus subsidiaries are in favour of deregulation and privatisation. Secondly, we have no intention of jeopardising the concessionary fares and the travelcard, which are two essential forms of travel subsidy not only for the disabled and pensioners, but for those who want to use different modes of transport.

Mr. Evennett: Is my hon. Friend aware of the appalling bus service in south-east London and that improvements are necessary to benefit my constituents? I understand that my hon. Friend intends to propose a new London bus executive, which would ensure that socially desirable routes are maintained when deregulation takes place.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has put his finger on the key advantage of deregulation. When privatised, the bus companies, including the London bus subsidiaries, will take the decision on when and where to run commercial services, but the London bus executive will, on behalf of the taxpayer, subsidise socially necessary services.

Mr. Fearn: Would the Minister consider an extension of the franchising of the bus service? At the moment, one third of bus miles are on franchise in London, and that initiative seems to be working. Is not that a better way to proceed than deregulation, which seems to be a shambles?

Mr. Freeman: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to tendering, which relates only to operating the service—successful tenderers do not keep the revenue. That initiative, welcome though it has been, has gone as far as it possibly can in benefiting London Transport. The next sensible step is deregulation, which will allow the London bus subsidiaries to run their own services.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are great advantages under the existing system and that tendering and licensing have served people in the peripheral areas of the metropolis, such as my own, very well? We hope that we will be not be exposed too much to the dogma of total deregulation.

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that my hon. Friend would want to see the private sector extend to the outer-London suburbs and offer a variety of additional services. That must be to the benefit of his constituents.

South Wales Rail Links

2. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about plans to upgrade rail links to south Wales.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail is planning to improve the signalling on the Paddington to south Wales line. That will improve journey times. In the longer term, British Rail will consider electrification when the existing rolling stock needs to be replaced.

Mr. Hain: The longer term is not good enough. The Government's abysmal failure to upgrade the links with south Wales means that that part of the country is in danger of becoming a forgotten backwater of the new Europe. Does the Minister agree that British Rail should extend the channel tunnel link via Waterloo international terminal not just to Cardiff, but to Swansea and, if necessary, to Fishguard as well?

Does the Minister further agree that sleeper services to Brussels and Paris must be extended to Swansea, and that a new freight terminal must be built at Swansea so that business and inward investment are given that vital artery to the new Europe from south Wales?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to talk down south Wales and the tremendous improvements and achievements in the south Wales economy. As for freight services, the hon. Gentleman will know of British Rail's plan to run channel tunnel freight from Pengam. He should be encouraging industries in south Wales to use that freight terminal, as I have done. If there is justification for another terminal, for example at Swansea, I am sure that British Rail will react positively.

Mr. Adley: Is not one of the main requirements of south Wales, and indeed south-west England, direct access to the channel tunnel preferably avoiding central London? At the

risk of being tedious, may I again ask my hon. Friend to ask British Rail to re-examine the option of full utilisation of the Reading-Redhill-Tonbridge line, which was built last century specifically with the channel tunnel in mind?

Mr. Freeman: Following my hon. Friend's advice I went to Redhill to determine the civil engineering works that would be required to carry freight further westwards, instead of through central London. Although the idea is interesting, it presents major planning and construction problems. However, I shall convey what my hon. Friend has said to British Rail.

Mr. Wigley: Is not the Minister aware that the quality of rolling stock on the south Wales line is already far from satisfactory? Substandard rolling stock is frequently being used and, partly as a consequence, trains are running late. British Rail needs to invest massively, not only on the line to Swansea, but on the one through to Fishguard to serve Ireland, and likewise on the Crewe to Holyhead line. Will my hon. Friend take up the issue with British Rail?

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is engaged in its largest investment programme for 30 years, led by Sir Bob Reid, in whom my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I have total confidence. This year, he and his board are leading an investment programme of £1·1 billion, and it is for them to make judgments about priorities. I recently visited Holyhead and rode on the railway line from Chester. British Rail is taking steps to improve journey times on the north Wales line.

M4 Widening

3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the scheme to widen the M4.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): The three commissions to study the need and options for increasing capacity on the length of the M4 between the M25 and junction 15 are proceeding satisfactorily, so the proposals can be announced next spring.

Mr. Coombs: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that that report of good progress will be well received in Swindon and elsewhere along the length of the M4. He will be aware of the fact that seven of my constituents were killed in an horrendous accident on the M4 in the spring of this year. In that context, what can be done to improve road safety on the M4, especially in relation to fog warning signals, motorway lighting and central reservation barriers, which have proved ineffective in preventing cross-over accidents?

Mr. Chope: I welcome my hon. Friend's endorsement of the Government's strategy to continue to invest heavily in the motorway network and the plans for the M4, which involve expenditure of about £600 million. It is fair to say that the accident on the M4 to which my hon. Friend referred was caused not by a vehicle crossing over the central reservation, but by a vehicle bouncing back off the central reservation. At the inquest it came out clearly that many people involved in the accident were driving too fast and too close together for the prevailing weather conditions. Earlier this month I announced the introduction of motorway matrix signs on the M4 that can display a fog legend. I hope that that will further reinforce the message to road users during foggy weather that it is indeed foggy, although that should be self-evident to responsible motorists.

Dr. Kim Howells: The Minister will be aware that the M4 corridor in South Wales has brought a welcome growth of new industries along it inside Wales, but to transport the manufactured products of Wales from that country, manufacturers have to pay to cross the Severn bridge, and will have to pay even more to cross the new bridge. Why should Welsh industries be penalised when the Government know that the bridge provides an artery to Europe and the great new future which they say companies will find there?

Mr. Chope: I thought that the hon. Gentleman's party was in favour of everything going by rail. His comments show that he recognises that to have a good road infrastructure is vital to the economy of England and Wales. That is why the Government are committed to investing heavily in that infrastructure.

Channel Tunnel

4. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the channel tunnel high-speed rail link; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I meet Sir Bob Reid regularly to discuss important railway issues, including the Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Dunn: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman, will he raise with him the placement of an international railway station in the north of Dartford and the extent to which he expects the private sector to be involved in that important project?

Mr. Rifkind: On the first point, British Rail will consider the precise provision of stations and other facilities as part of the work that it is currently doing. On the second point, I agree about the desirability of encouraging maximum private sector involvement in the project. I shall soon appoint a merchant bank to advise on private sector finance for the new line.

Mr. Tony Banks: What progress is being made in starting to run the environmental impact assessment which Mr. Ripa di Meana has ordered the Government to undertake? Is it true that up to 1,000 homes in the Stratford area could be subject to subsidence as a result of tunnel boring? It seems an alarmist story, but I am alarmed because I have one of those homes.

Mr. Rifkind: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, long before Mr. Ripa di Meana expressed any opinions on the subject, the Government announced that, of course, there would be an environmental impact assessment of the project. It will take place as soon as British Rail's current work on the details of the line is complete. That answer also covers the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question. The matter that he raises is covered by the present detailed examination.

Mr. Moate: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that while British Rail is working on the details of

the Arup route, there will be a great danger of a management vacuum in the project? Will British Rail always be the manager of the project? If not, whom will the merchant bank to which he referred advise? Is not it time to give some new management impetus to the programme?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend, and the Government have made it clear that the project should be taken forward as a private sector project. In order that no time is wasted, it is appropriate that British Rail should continue its work on the detailed examination of the line and the environmental impact assessment. In the meantime, the merchant bank that I am soon to appoint will advise on private sector interest in becoming involved in the project. That will ensure that uninterrupted progress can be made.

5. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold talks with the chairman of British Rail about the provision of custom-built trains for the channel tunnel from the commencement of its opening.

Mr. Rifkind: The delivery of passenger trains authorised for channel tunnel services is a contractual matter between British Rail and its continental counterparts and the manufacturers. The chairman of British Rail keeps me informed of developments.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Minister will know that he is in grave danger of finding himself opening a tunnel which, from the first day, has no trains to run in it. Trains are already being built before prototypes are finished. The Secretary of State will be aware of all the trouble that that inevitably causes. Is not it farcical that the combination of brilliant minds that are responsible for building the tunnel, all the staff, and all the work that has gone into the project may not succeed in getting trains running until perhaps as much as a year after the tunnel is opened?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have given British Rail all the necessary authorisations. For inter-capital services, British Rail ordered the trains way back in 1989. There is a problem, which is the responsibility of the manufacturers, GEC Alsthom. I and Sir Bob Reid recently saw Lord Weinstock to impress on him that his company is expected to meet its contractual obligations. It will be supremely unfortunate if that company does not supply the trains on time. That has been drawn to Lord Weinstock's attention in the firmest possible way.

Mrs. Gorman: When my right hon. and learned Friend is considering the tunnel, will he not neglect the impact that it will have on the A13, which runs through my constituency? May I persuade him to meet me one night at the Blind Beggar on the Mile End road, where I will be pleased to show him some of the most appalling congestion on this two-lane trunk road——

Mr. Speaker: Order. But is it on the railway line?

Mrs. Gorman: It is related to it, Sir, because the railway line impinges on it.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be happy to meet my hon. Friend at the Blind Beggar or elsewhere. I am sure that she will be able to convey to me any implications for her constituents of the channel tunnel provisions.

Mr. David Marshall: Will the Secretary of State confirm that British Rail has not even ordered the trains or the new sleeper coaches for the services through the tunnel that will go north of London? What hope then is there for any of the through services north of London to be operating when the tunnel opens? Is not that disgraceful, and what does he intend to do to change it?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is being uncharacteristically unfair to British Rail. British Rail is ready to take this forward, but it is not a single-company project. We are in negotiations with both French and Belgium railways because all three companies are involved in the very projects to which he has referred. It is only when agreement is reached on a basis acceptable to all three companies that the trains can be ordered.

The Government have given all the necessary approvals. I very much hope—and so does British Rail—that the negotiations are brought to an early conclusion so as to allow the necessary contracts to be signed.

Mr. Fry: In view of my right hon. and learned Friend's reply, will he reflect on the fact that both the French and the Belgium railways are in the public sector? If there is to be this great new European co-operation, is not it time that the railway companies at least got together so that British Rail could order the sleeper trains and thus fulfil the contractual obligations into which it has entered?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Both companies are in the public sector. When I last met the French Transport Minister, I drew to his attention the importance that we attach to the French Government's doing all within their power to ensure that these matters are accommodated as quickly and as conveniently as possible.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Secretary of State aware of how disgraceful his answer was? Everywhere north of Watford will be denied proper access to the tunnel, yet he stands up and tells Parliament that the Government have no role in that. He should get off his backside and get the companies together to ensure that we have the engines and coaches to allow the north of England and Scotland to benefit fully from the tunnel.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government certainly have a role to play, and I have never suggested otherwise. That is why we have provided all the necessary resources that will go towards the £1·4 billion of investment that British Rail is already incurring in respect of these matters. I also met Lord Weinstock on two occasions in the past few months to impress on him the importance of his company's fulfilling its contractual obligations to British Rail and others involved in these projects.

Tilbury Port

6. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has taken place under the Ports Act 1991 to privatise the port of Tilbury.

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I am pleased to say that the Port of London authority has now advertised the port of Tilbury for sale, and thus begun the bidding process for it. The PLA's aim is to complete the sale of Tilbury by the end of February.

Mr. Janman: The overwhelming majority of employees at the port, who according to a recent survey said that they supported a management-employee buy-out and would

buy shares in the newly privatised port, will want to congratulate my hon. Friend on the fast progress being made. Bearing in mind that the overriding priority is to privatise the port as soon as possible, can my hon. Friend assure me that he will give the fullest consideration to the concerns being expressed by the Port of London police authority as privatisation proceeds?

Mr. McLoughlin: Indeed, the Port of London police authority has made representations through my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). I am urgently considering them and I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

It is quite obvious that the Labour party has been opposed to the privatisation scheme throughout, but the simple fact is that we will give those who work at Tilbury the opportunity to be part of the company. That is a welcome move, which is opposed by the Labour party.

Mr. Spearing: Can the Minister confirm that there is a major anomaly in the Act and in possible privatisation —the fact that the port of Tilbury is not defined geographically? Therefore, can he confirm that if that port obtains property in central or west London the property will become part of the port? Would not it be anomalous for the existing publicly owned Port of London police authority to become the police of a private company? Will the Minister resolve that as soon as possible?

Mr. McLoughlin: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman considers what happened to the Merseyside police force when the Mersey docks were privatised, because he will find no anomaly there. As I have said, we are currently considering the broader aspects of the matter. This is another example of the Labour party's total opposition to privatisation and to people playing a part in the company in which they work. It has not changed.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I hope that the Minister is successful in resolving the serious and real problems faced by the Port of London authority. It will be a major triumph for the Government if they pass an important Act of privatisation while still showing concern for the real needs of people who are affected by it.

Mr. McLoughlin: I take seriously my hon. Friend's point, which we are currently addressing. Just a few weeks ago my hon. Friend led a delegation to see me and the points raised at that meeting are being investigated.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Minister aware that the Port of London authority's chief executive, Mr. McNab, who was appointed by the Government and is responsible for the privatisation of the port, was found by a recent employment tribunal to have been untruthful in the evidence and not to have kept truthful board minutes? Does not the Minister accept that such an outright condemnation of the honesty and integrity of Mr. McNab makes him not a fit and proper person to carry out the privatisation of the port of Tilbury? The Minister should use his powers to remove him.

Mr. McLoughlin: The person who will make the recommendations to the Secretary of State is the chairman of the PLA, Sir Brian Kellnet, and not Dr. McNab as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Fishing Vessel Losses

7. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels have been lost in each of the past three years; and what was the number of fishermen who lost their lives in these founderings of their vessels.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of United Kingdom fishing vessels lost in 1988, 1989 and 1990, were 22, 22 and 17 respectively. The number of fishermen who lost their lives as a result of accidents to fishing vessels for those years were 18, 16 and 22 respectively.

Dr. Godman: I acknowledge that occasionally fishing vessels, even the biggest freezer trawlers, can be overwhelmed by severe weather. Does the Minister agree that some of the sinkings to which he referred have been brought about by scandalously negligent watchkeeping on the merchant ships that have collided with the fishing vessels? That happened in a recent case in the Firth of Clyde because of negligent watchkeeping on a nuclear submarine. Perhaps men would have neither the time nor the opportunity to don survival suits, but will the Minister assure the House that he will support European Commission recommendations on the carriage of survival suits on our fishing vessels? If such a suit saves the life of only one fisherman in the next year, the Commission's recommendation will have been worthwhile.

Mr. McLoughlin: Any fishing disaster is a tragedy and there have been a number over the years, as hon. Members are sadly aware. Research is under way to establish the most effective type of in-water thermal protection for fishermen when they are working in exposed situations. It is not quite as easy as the hon. Gentleman suggests, because there is the problem of putting on the equipment and the suits in time when an incident occurs. The problem with wearing such equipment all the time is that it can restrict movement. I certainly take on board the serious points made by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. David Martin: May I express upon my hon. Friend the continuing strength of feeling in Portsmouth about the Wilhemina J. tragedy, especially in view of the Zulfikar case in Cyprus? Will my hon. Friend address that with increasing urgency? Will he let me know when he expects to receive the marine accident investigation branch inquiry report on the matter and when its findings will be made known through his Department to the public, the relatives and advisers? Were there observers in Cyprus on behalf of his Department or the branch and, if so, what lessons were learnt from their observations?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can confirm that an observer from the Department was present at the trial to which my hon. Friend refers. The inspector is in the process of writing his report, which will be submitted to the chief inspector of marine accidents and then, in due course, to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I am concerned about the length of time that it takes to get such reports published and I have asked the chief inspector and various other people to re-examine the time that is needed for consultation to see whether the bringing of these reports into the public domain can be speeded up. That would be in everybody's interests.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: As reference has already been made to the tragic sinking of the Antares, can the Minister

tell us what discussions the Department has held with the Ministry of Defence on this issue? Was there any input from the Ministry of Transport, as it has responsibility for safety at sea, and if not, why not?

Mr. McLoughlin: There have been continuing talks with the Ministry of Defence following the Antares case and a number of suggestions have been made by both departments. I am waiting to publish the report from the marine accident investigation branch.

Mr. Harris: Is my hon. Friend aware of the deep and justifiable concern felt about the number of fishing boats that have been lost as a result of collisions with merchant vessels? An example of this was the accident involving the Margaret and William II, with the loss of two fishermen, in my constituency. Now that all these accidents are being investigated by the marine accident investigation branch, once my hon. Friend gets its report, will he conduct an overall review to examine root causes of the problem, including what I and many others regard as a defect in international maritime law and the inadequacy of watch keeping on merchant vessels?

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes. The chief inspector may make recommendations on these matters and if he does so, they will be seriously considered.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister agree that the figures for the loss of fishing vessels that have been given to the House show that there is now cause for serious concern about safety implications? Will the Minister examine the competence of the marine accident investigation branch? The families concerned in Portsmouth and the people shocked by the revelations in the "World in Action" programme agree with Labour Members that what is needed is not just investigation of individual accidents, but a complete review of maritime safety and fishing activity in the channel and United Kingdom waters, extending to the whole of international maritime law.

Mr. McLoughlin: The simple point is that fishing accidents and losses are nothing new. They are tragic whenever they happen, and important lessons can be learnt from them. When we set up the marine accident investigation branch not long ago, the Opposition did not object to it. They did not call into question the competence of the senior officials who administer that organisation and I am sorry that they have started to do so today. When reports are published and recommendations are made, we need to look at them and act on them.

London Underground

8. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the programme for improvements on London Underground following the increased funding announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As well as the Jubilee line extension and completion of the Central line modernisation, London Underground's programme is likely to include improvements to stations at the southern end of the Northern line; more refurbished trains starting with the Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines; and the redevelopment of Waterloo underground station.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply, but is the Minister aware that Londoners want improvements in the foreseeable future? How much of the money that we are told is available will achieve that? What real consultations will there be with the commuters who use London Underground? Will the improvements include some to the disgraceful service on the Northern line which goes through the constituencies of many hon. Members? Specifically, in my constituency, when will the escalators at Tooting Bec station, at last, work?

Mr. Freeman: As for the level of investment in the existing underground system, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, that about £700 million per annum should be spent on the existing railway, will be met in 1993. That represents a significant increase in investment, and that will help the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Carrington: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is considerable disquiet about those people whose homes are above the proposed route for the east-west crossrail and over the Chelsea-Hackney line? There is concern about the effect of the noise and vibration from the trains that will run through the tunnels. Will my hon. Friend ensure that sufficient money is available in both of the projects to ensure that there is proper environmental protection for those who live above the tunnels?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will know that each of the three new major tube lines—the Jubilee line, crossrail and Chelsea-Hackney—will be subject to a rigorous environmental impact assessment. I give my hon. Friend the assurance that vibration on the ground is one of the factors that will be taken into account.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that one of the most frustrating experiences of Londoners travelling on the underground system is to find that lifts and escalators are not working? Is the hon. Gentleman aware also that the programme has been slowed down in the current year, with the consequence that only last month London Underground had to report that one in 10 of its lifts and escalators was out of order? Will he now prioritise the repair and refurbishment programme for London Underground's escalators and lifts? Will he back that priority by ring-fencing the money that is devoted to that programme? Will he also admit that there is no so-called new money for the refurbishment of the Northern line and the carriages on it?

Mr. Freeman: Over the next three years, the Government will provide London Underground with almost double the amount of grant that it has received for the past three years. That will go a long way to ensuring that the escalator modernisation programme is enhanced and accelerated. That is one of the purposes of the money. The hon. Lady talks about London Underground and makes criticism of it, but the criticisms are not matched by one extra penny being promised for it by the Labour party.

Rail Services (South-east)

9. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement about Network SouthEast's achievement of its preformance targets in

respect of passenger services; and what requests he has received from British Rail for funds for further investment on the London-Dover route.

Mr. Rifkind: While performance on average for Network SouthEast during the first half of this financial year has shown an improvement over last year, recent performance on the Kent coast lines has not been acceptable. On the Kent coast, an £86 million resignalling scheme is in progress, which should result in significant improvements.

Mr. Shaw: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. I assure him that he is correct that performance recently has not been good enough, and that it must be better. It is important that the Networker trains are brought forward and that we see reliable carriages and coaches on the line. My constituents are receiving better services from the public sector in health and education, and from competitive tendering in local authorities. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that we want to see a better performance in the public sector from British Rail, or we must privatise it as soon as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend has recognised the proper priorities. The Government have not yet received a formal investment submission from British Rail in repect of the Networkers. I am glad that the £86 million investment in signalling is going ahead. Recent performance deteriorated badly over the past month, and we hope that British Rail will take urgent action to ensure that the deterioration is rectified.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the autumn statement promised no new orders for the next three years for Network SouthEast? If new trains can be introduced in other parts of Europe by means of leasing arrangements, why is that system not used here so that there could be new trains instead of spending £50 million to bring up, as it were, old ones but still achieve only a poor standard of service?

Mr. Rifkind: The main difference between the Government's attitude towards British Rail and that of the Labour Government is that we have been increasing resources for it while the Labour Administration reduced them. As for the autumn statement, it is for British Rail to decide how it uses the resources that we are providing for it. British Rail has more resources now than at any time since before the days of Dr. Beeching, and that is something which the Labour Government could not begin to claim.

The hon. Gentleman talked about leasing. He should realise that unless the risk is transferred to the private sector the public sector will not be able to bear higher levels of expenditure. If the hon. Gentleman cannot understand that, it shows why he is unfit ever to be Secretary of State for Transport.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that despite that extra money for British Rail, the service that it offers the Medway towns is a disgrace? Commuters there know that they are on the worst line in the south-east. Will my right hon. and learned Friend please undertake a special investigation into that worst line?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will know that she is in competition with others of my right hon. and hon. Friends in making that particular claim. I entirely acknowledge that Network SouthEast, whose rolling stock is an average of 19 years old, is in a more disadvantaged position than almost any other network in the United Kingdom. That is why a substantial proportion of the resources available to British Rail are going towards the refurbishment of Network SouthEast and its very old rolling stock. About half the investment programme is directed at that particular part of the country.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Tenants

29. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next proposes to visit tenants of the Duchy in the county palatine.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I recently spent a day visiting tenants on the Duchy's Yorkshire survey, and I was greatly impressed by the efficient and cost-effective running of the estates by Duchy tenants. I very much look forward to my next visit to the county palatine.

Mr. Pike: While that might be very encouraging, did the Chancellor discuss with tenants and others resident in the county palatine the problems still arising from the poll tax? Will he urge the Government, even now, to waive the 20 per cent. payment for which those living in poverty and at the lower end of the income scale are liable? Will he also give councils discretion to waive payments due, when they can see that there is no possible chance of recovering them?

Mr. Patten: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the rebates available to community charge payers are much more generous than they were under domestic rating. When I next visit the county palatine, I will certainly take up—on the hon. Gentleman's part, I am sure—the case of all those Labour councillors who still refuse to pay their community charge.

Mr. Sumberg: If my right hon. Friend had a chance to discuss local government finance when he was last in the county palatine, did he mention the Labour party's proposal to remove all forms of capping on local authority expenditure, which would represent an open cheque book for every left-wing Labour authority, both in the county palatine and outside it?

Mr. Patten: As my hon. Friend makes clear, under Labour not only would taxes imposed by central Government be much higher but taxes imposed by local government would also be higher. That is why there will not be, thank heavens, a Labour Government.

Dr. Cunningham: When the Chancellor next visits the Duchy, will he explain to the people of the north-west why it is that Tory Members of Parliament who supported everything that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) said and did for 12 years are now queueing up at television stations to attack her? Will the right hon. Gentleman set an example, as chairman of the Conservative party, and reaffirm the warm loyalty that he personally showed to that right hon. Lady when he was a member of her Cabinet? Does the Chancellor condemn the

things that Conservative Members are saying about and doing to the right hon. Member for Finchley now—or is he orchestrating them?

Mr. Patten: When the hon. Gentleman came to the Dispatch Box, I thought that he was going to say something about the commitment to minimum binding rates of taxation that his party has signed. I will make my position absolutely plain. I agree with what Conservative party leaders have been saying about referendums for the last 15 or 20 years. I am sure that one thing on which everyone in the county palatine and on which public opinion generally is agreed is that after the Leader of the Opposition's miserable little speech in last Wednesday's debate, all should be united in their determination to make sure that the right hon. Gentleman never makes a speech from this side of the House.

Mr. Mans: When my right hon. Friend next visits the tenants, will he take the opportunity to visit the British Aerospace centre at Warton, and see for himself the extent of the facilities there for military aircraft production? Those facilities would be laid waste if Labour ever governed the country.

Mr. Patten: Labour's commitment to £6 billion of defence cuts would, of course, have a considerable impact on employment in the defence industries, as well as undermining the defences of the United Kingdom.

Devolution of Powers

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for the devolution of his powers from Whitehall to Lancaster.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no such proposals.

Mr. Hughes: Does that mean that the Chancellor has the same objection to the concept of devolution as he apparently has to the concept of a referendum? Has the stunning success achieved by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) in the recent by-election exerted no influence on the Cabinet, and has it failed to change the Government's attitude to devolution, whether in Scotland, Wales or the regions of England?

Mr. Patten: I note that—for the time being, at least—the Liberal party seems to have changed its position. Normally, it bases its arguments on its commitment to proportional representation. The hon. Gentleman, however, seems to be basing his arguments about Kincardine and Deeside, and the Liberals' position in the opinion polls, on plurality voting in single-Member constituencies. Liberal party policy changes from one part of the country to another.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing surprise at the temerity of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) in asking a question about my constituency? Does he accept that my constituency has attracted increasing numbers of students and an increasing volume of industry? Any Department of State that had the good fortune to come to us would be very welcome.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is, of course, right. Any constituency represented by a Member of Parliament as diligent as she would also be very fortunate.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

40. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when he next intends to meet representatives of Her Majesty's Treasury to discuss the estimates of the National Audit Office.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): I have no plans to do so. Section 4 of the National Audit Act 1983 requires the Public Accounts Commission to examine the National Audit Office estimate and to lay it before the House, having regard to any advice received by the Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury. Treasury advice takes the form of a written memorandum. The Commission is due to consider the National Audit Office estimate for 1992-93 on 10 December.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can the hon. Gentleman imagine what might happen if the National Audit Office were given the right to start crawling over the accounts of the European Community, and perhaps producing the odd value-for-money report? Is it not about time that Members of the European Parliament demanded a far higher level of accountability in regard to taxpayers' money that is being used for the Commission's expenditure programme?

Sir Peter Hordern: That is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General, and I have his views.

I hope that, at the Maastricht meeting, full consideration will be given to the development of public audit in the Community. The European Court of Audit does useful work, but it is small in relation to the vast task of auditing Commission expenditure. There are also no real, regular arrangements for clear financial reporting, for the court's reports to be debated by the European Parliament, for the Parliament to make clear recommendations to the Commission or for the Commission to publish its response.

In other words, there is no mechanism similar to ours involving a Public Accounts Committee supported by a National Audit Office. It may take some time to go fully down that path, but I think it important that we move in such a direction with more urgency than has been shown up to now.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is it not a problem that, although the Court of Audit cannot deal with the whole range of European expenditure, there is no back-up to ensure that the work that it does produce is properly considered—and receives the media attention that would make the 300 million people in the European Community realise where good work is being done in Europe, and where there is frightening waste, inefficiency, corruption and cheating?

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no mechanism whereby the Commission must account to the European Parliament, and I think that there should be.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Duties

31. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much time he has spent on his official duties in the last fortnight.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I spend up to a quarter of my time carrying out my duties as Chancellor of the Duchy.

Mr. Winnick: They are pretty time consuming, I must say.

What would the right hon. Gentleman say to his colleagues—or some of them, at least—who feel that he should spend more time carrying out his duties as Chancellor, and less time orchestrating a campaign against the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who is apparently now being accused of losing the Tories the next election? How many by-elections have been won by the Tories since the right hon. Gentleman has held his present post?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) will be moved and touched by the hon. Gentleman's support for her views, which has been one of the consistent features of his political career.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend remember recently quoting Randolph Churchill, who said, "We trust the people"? Does he agree that it will be extremely useful and important, irrespective of the question of a referendum, to make sure that any deal that we may strike at Maastricht is backed by a free vote in the House of Commons?

Mr. Patten: I believe in trusting the people, but I do not believe in either this House or the Government shuffling out of their responsibilities. What we shall be negotiating at Maastricht is a step forward in co-operation. We are not talking about a leap into the unknown. That is what we are attempting to prevent, and it makes my views against a referendum even stronger than they would otherwise be.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Hours

41. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on his proposals for changes in parliamentary hours of business.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): As the House knows, I have submitted a memorandum to the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and also appeared before the Committee to give oral evidence. In so doing, I was expressing my personal views, and not a collective view on behalf of the Government.

I am sure the whole House looks forward, as I do, with great interest to the Committee's recommendations.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not outrageous that a senior member of the Government is talking about a four-day week for Members of Parliament and suggesting at the same time a 48-hour week for miners? A better way to deal with Fridays would be to ensure that 35 Fridays are allocated to private Members' Bills, then some of the people who queue up might have a chance to get those Bills into law. The Minister, on behalf of his colleagues, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, wants a four-day week to try to shut up those Tory ex-Prime Ministers and others who are criticising the current Prime Minister, but the ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) will keep coming out into the daylight——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has said enough. What is his question? Come on, wind it up.

Mr. Skinner: The ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley, will keep coming out into the daylight——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman can express his views about the organisation of the sittings of the House, and whether they should include Fridays, to the Committee. As I have stressed before to him, when I think I carried the vast majority of the House with me, to suggest that we are talking about a four-day week for Members of Parliament, even if we do not meet on some Fridays, is utterly ridiculous. My point was that hon. Members increasingly have constituency engagements to undertake on Fridays that they cannot carry out at weekends. I was trying to take that into account. The hon. Gentleman does the House no service by suggesting that this has anything to do with a four-day week.

Sir John Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have no wish for a change in parliamentary hours? Will he, however, consider providing more time for very important debates, such as the great debate last Thursday on Europe? I understand that 78 right hon. and hon. Members wanted to speak but only 20 were called. None of us wants our constituents to ask what we are doing here.

Mr. MacGregor: When a very large number of Members wish to speak in certain debates, it is inevitable that not all of them will be called, but that does not mean that we are not expressing our views to the Government of the day, and that can be said to our constituents. I sympathise with my hon. Friend's point about last week's big debate. That is why we lengthened the first day to midnight. I am sure that we shall have plenty of other opportunities to discuss this matter.

Procedure Reforms

42. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for reform of the House of Commons procedure.

Mr. MacGregor: I have put a number of ideas to the Select Committee that is chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). It is now for the Committee to make recommendations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not it quite outrageous that, despite the fact that it has been out for six months, the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which deals with chairmen of Select Committees and their private interests, has not been debated by the House? Is it true that it has not been debated because of pressure from

Select Committee Chairmen? May we have an assurance that when it is finally debated it will be not on a take-note motion but on substantive resolutions tabled by the Lord President by which we can make reforms?

Mr. MacGregor: It is not outrageous because there are often longer periods between the publication of a Select Committee report and the opportunity to debate it in the House. We have had much business to consider. The House has just heard that my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) would have liked to spend longer on the European debate. There is much pressure on business. I hope to arrange a debate on this matter before too long, but it certainly will not be before Christmas because there is much to do before then. The precise form of the debate has yet to be settled, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that it has nothing to do with pressure from anyone not to have a debate; it is purely a question of pressure on business in the House.

Mr. Dykes: Does the Lord President agree that neither the procedure nor the constitutional practices of this ancient House would be affected by anything at Maastricht—no domestic constitutional proposals will be affected—so the idea of a referendum is irrelevant?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy made that point about Maastricht. The position of Conservative leaders in recent years on referendums on European issues has been consistent. In expressing his views on Thursday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was entirely in line with that consistency.

Mr. Grocott: Is the Lord President aware that many Labour Members would recommend substantial reforms of procedures, not least to try to make them more intelligible to our much wider audience through television? However, a reported view of his that is causing some concern and alarm is that we should get rid of the 10-minute rule procedure. That is one of the most valuable devices for Back Benchers to express views and to introduce legislation that often becomes law. Will he confirm that there is no intention to take away that right?

Mr. MacGregor: I made a considerable number of proposals to reduce the number of late sittings, and in so doing was trying to strike a balance between the needs of Government, Opposition and Back Benchers. I made a number of recommendations, which the Select Committee can consider, advocating more time in other directions for Back Benchers to put their point of view. The Select Committee will make recommendations and then the House will decide.

Mr. Butler: Did my right hon. Friend's proposals include an automatic guillotine at midnight?

Mr. MacGregor: No, they did not, but I hope that the thrust of many of my proposals will lead to fewer late-night sittings, which we have achieved this year because at least 20 measures that formerly would have been considered on the Floor of the House after 10 o'clock have been considered by the European Standing Committees.

Members Lobby

43. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will ask the Advisory Committee on Works of Art to make proposals for using the two vacant plinths in the Members Lobby.

Mr. MagGregor: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Banks: What a very dull and unimaginative response that was. Is the Lord President aware of the wonderful opportunity that has been missed? If one of the plinths in the Members Lobby had been occupied by a statue of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), one year ago almost to the day joyous Londoners could have pulled it down, rather like Muscovites toppled the statue of Feliks Dzerzhinsky? If Stalinists in eastern Europe are to have their statues toppled, why did not we have an opportunity to do it to the west's great Stalinist? In view of her good contribution on Europe, may we have a statue out there, provided that she meets the necessary qualification?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman may have been doing his research after all. I was going to accuse him of not having done his research and of frothing at the mouth to no purpose. He will know that, by common consent and usage, there is a 10-year qualification for the plinths. He may have been quite outrageously referring to that in the final part of his question. That is the answer in relation to the question of any others appearing on the plinths.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as a distinguished and distinctive member of the Procedure Committee, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should have known about the 10-year rule? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be for a successor Committee to decide whether my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) should be commemorated and that that Committee may decide that it would be better to have a free vote in the House on that subject rather than a referendum?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made plain my view on referendums. I have made it clear that the Government Front Bench is being entirely consistent on the subject of referendums. We have consistently followed the view of Conservative leaders since 1975, when the matter was seriously debated in relation to European issues.

As for the plinth, my hon. Friend is right to say that that will be a matter for some perhaps long-distant Committee to consider again.

Disabled People (Access)

44. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when facilities are to be provided to help disabled people enter the Grand Committee Room, Westminster Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the necessary approval has been given to the installation of a stairlift.

Mr. Cox: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on that reply. When will that work commence? The right hon. Gentleman may be aware, if he has seen what happens, of the agony and difficulty that many disabled people suffer when trying to gain entry to the Grand Committee Room.

This is a matter of great urgency. If we can spend millions of pounds on office accommodation for Members—that may have been necessary—surely we can spend a similar amount as quickly as possible to give more people access to the Grand Committee Room.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Funds are available and the detailed work can now go ahead. I hope that the stairlift will be installed early in the new year.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of today's decision by the Court of Appeal to allow the appeal by Winston Silcott, may I ask whether you have received a request by the Home Secretary to make a statement on that matter? If you have not, will you use your good offices to nudge the Home Secretary in that direction so that he apologises to Winston Silcott and his family? We need also to know the position of the police officers who forged Winston Silcott's confessions.

Mr. Speaker: I have had no request for a statement, but that is a matter for the Government. The Leader of the House is on the Government Front Bench, and I am sure that he has heard the hon. Gentleman's point.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am aware that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is in the Chamber. Have you had any request, Sir from the Northern Ireland Office to make a statement on last evening's incidents at Crumlin Road prison? It is the Government's duty to protect prisoners. I appreciate that there are segregation problems, but we have asked the Government to do more about separating prisoners for safety purposes and they have ignored our advice.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I have had no request for a statement. I shall give the hon. Member the same reply that I gave previously: this is a matter for the Leader of the House, who is in the Chamber.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should welcome your guidance on the use of private notice questions. I do not wish in any way to criticise you, and I appreciate that I applied today to ask such a question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just it. I am afraid that we do not discuss in the Chamber applications for private notice questions. If the hon. Member would like to see me privately, I shall give him more information.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). I am sure that you will agree that there should be a debate on the Court of Appeal system now that three major cases have been overturned in two years after substantial campaigns. That clearly underlines the need for a change in the appeal court system to allow people to have their cases brought before the court without the necessity of a five-year campaign by friends and families. Those people have stood up for justice, despite the abuse that they received from the public.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter of order in the Chamber. The Leader of the House is here and will have heard what has been said.

Orders of the Day

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill will authorise the construction of a barrage and associated works across the estuaries of the Rivers Taff and Ely in Cardiff bay. It provides for the acquisition of land and rights associated with these main works. There is also provision for the necessary framework to enable the barrage to be operated in an appropriate manner with regard to water quality, flooding, the protection of fish, and for the management of the lake so created.

The scheme embodied in the Bill is absolutely vital for the future of Cardiff. It provides an opportunity for the docklands to be redeveloped as a high quality, high density part of the city itself. It will permit the development of a city waterfront that would be an asset to a major city anywhere in the world. It will create an environment in which housing and jobs will be created on a scale which could not be achieved in any other way.

Before I describe the detailed provisions of the Bill, I would like to remind the House of the background to the scheme and why, sadly, the very many benefits which would arise from the construction of the barrage have, so far, been denied to the people of Cardiff.

Seldom can the provisions of a Bill coming before this House for a Second Reading have been so thoroughly debated and examined already on the Floor of the House, in Committee and in another place. Many hon. Members will remember that we last debated the provisions of a Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill on 16 April this year. That was a private Bill promoted jointly by the Cardiff Bay development corporation and South Glamorgan county council. It had completed its passage through another place. It had undergone detailed and lengthy examination by a Select Committee of this House. Sadly, however, a few Opposition Members sought to block the Bill as it neared the end of its passage through Parliament.

For our part, the Government were just not prepared to stand by and see our capital city and its people denied the benefits of this imaginative project. That is why, on 16 April, my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council immediately announced that we would introduce a Government Bill to achieve the main objectives of the private Bill. This Bill fulfils the commitment given by my right hon. Friend.

Of course, the Cardiff bay barrage proposal goes back much further than that. In November 1985 the then Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards, now Lord Crickhowell, commissioned studies into the feasibility, costs and benefits of a barrage between Penarth dock and Cardiff docks. In parallel with the technical feasibility studies, an investment appraisal study was also commissioned. These reports, published in June 1986, suggested that a barrage would not only be technically

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feasible but would be likely to create significant new development opportunities in the Cardiff waterfront area and beyond.

Further studies on engineering aspects, conservation and investment potential were also commissioned. In December 1986 Lord Crickhowell announced that the plans to transform the Cardiff docklands would be taken forward by an urban development corporation—Cardiff Bay development corporation—established specifically for that task. The corporation was set up in that far-sighted move to stimulate and control the regeneration of the docklands area. In particular, it was to carry forward the engineering and financial planning of a barrage between Penarth head and Queen Alexandra dock.

Following its formal establishment in April 1987, the development corporation commissioned detailed studies of all aspects of the barrage, including environmental and conservation implications. Together with South Glamorgan county council, it introduced a private Bill into this place in November 1987. This was subsequently withdrawn in order to incorporate provisions enabling the construction of alternative feeding grounds for birds displaced once the barrage was constructed.

A new private Bill was introduced in November 1988. It completed its passage through another place with very little amendment. Progress through this House took far longer. It was debated no fewer than five times on the Floor of the House and was given long and detailed scrutiny by a Select Committee over 26 days. The Committee heard a great deal of expert evidence from the promoters and petitioners. Local residents were given an opportunity to present evidence at first hand when the Committee sat in Cardiff. The Committee concluded that, subject to some important amendments and undertakings relating to groundwater, the Bill should be allowed to proceed. Unfortunately, a small minority disagreed.

It is against that background that the Government are introducing the Bill. It falls into five main parts supplemented by seven schedules. Part I provides the necessary powers for the construction of the barrage and associated works. Part II deals with the acquisition of land. Part III deals with the operation of the barrage and the management of the inland bay, the outer harbour and the lagoon which would serve as an alternative feeding ground for wading birds. Part IV makes provision for a scheme of groundwater damage protection, the details of which are set out in schedule 7 to the Bill. Finally, part V covers a range of miscellaneous items.

The proposed line of the barrage was one of several options considered in the early feasibility studies. It provides the greatest area of enclosed water, retains the operational use of Cardiff dock and provides the greatest opportunity for waterside development and water-related recreational uses. It is a fundamental principle that the design of the barrage authorised by the Bill should impound the estuaries of the Taff and Ely. In doing so, it should not impound the entrance to the operational Cardiff dock, but should enclose the Penarth marina.

The tidal lagoon would provide alternative feeding grounds for birds displaced from the bay by the impounded lake. It would cover an area of 23 hectares and provide mudflats similar to those which would be permanently covered within the bay area. Discussions with the Countryside Council for Wales and other conservation bodies about the best method of achieving wildlife measures are continuing.

The Bill requires the development corporation to operate the barrage so that the water immediately behind it should be maintained at a level between 4 m and 4·5 m above ordnance datum except in certain circumstances defined in the Bill. That is consistent with the provisions of the former private Bill and with the views of the Select Committee, which recommended that the water level should not go below 4 m. It is a fundamental principle of the Bill that the impounded lake should permanently cover the existing mudflats. We believe that the proposed water level as set out in the Bill strikes an appropriate balance between development needs and the practical considerations after impoundment. It would provide the maximum area of water within the engineering constraints and would be broadly equivalent to mean high water mark.

As I have already said, the Government believe that the economic case for the barrage is very strong. The attractive new environment created by the barrage will result in 25,000 direct and 7,500 indirect jobs. Private sector investment of well over £1 billion will be attracted into the area and 4,800 homes will be built, of which a quarter will be low-cost social housing.

Against that background, it is regrettable that the Opposition intend to move to deny the Bill a Second Reading this evening. I very much hope that they will consider their position. I have studied the reasoned amendment carefully and, as far as I can see, all the points covered would be more relevant for discussion in Committee. There are answers to all the points.

I have just met some colleagues in the House—and I do not dare to name the Opposition Members—who asked me questions about the amendment because there were points that they could not understand or that they had not seen before. I do not know why the amendment has been tabled. Parts of it were not raised with me before today's debate. Somebody quite disgracefully suggested that the amendment was just a fictitious fig leaf which was designed to cover the cracks in the Labour party!

I very much hope that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) will be courageous this afternoon. I urge him to stop any move to allow the barrage project to continue to be used as a party political football. I believe that the project is so exciting, innovative and imaginative that it should be approached on an all-party basis. I invite the hon. Gentleman to consider that and to endorse the Bill. I invite him to join me in welcoming this magnificent project, which will do so much for Wales.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): For a moment I thought that the Secretary of State had reached his peroration. Will the right hon. Gentleman deal with the financial consequences of the Bill?

Mr. Hunt: First, I shall deal with the environmental sensitivities of the project, because, when considering the economic benefits of the project, the Government were fully aware of those sensitivities.

The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology was commissioned by the Welsh Office to assess the affects of the project on over-wintering shore birds. That study and other environmental studies commissioned by the Cardiff Bay

development corporation and South Glamorgan county council were brought together in a detailed environmental impact assessment by Liverpool university.

The House will know that a new Standing Order came into force at the start of this parliamentary Session. It requires Bills authorising certain works to be accompanied by an environmental statement. This Bill is the first to meet that requirement. The environmental assessment prepared for the private Bill has been updated so as to comply with the new Standing Order. Copies of the environmental statement and a non-technical summary of it have been placed in the Vote Office. The House will wish to satisfy itself that any decision to enact the Bill is taken on the basis of a full consideration of that assessment of the Bill's environmental effects.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that environmental assessments, or statements, that accompany private or hybrid Bills may take two forms? Annex 1 environmental impact assessments must be referred to the appropriate regulatory agency, such as the National Rivers Authority should it deal with water quality or, especially in this case, the local environmental health office of the city council in respect of water use. The other type of assessment may comply with schedule 2 to the original environmental impact assessment directive from the European Community and it does not have to be referred to the appropriate regulatory agency. The environmental impact assessment prepared for the Bill is an example of the latter type as no reference has been made to the NRA or to the environmental health department of Cardiff city council. Why did the right hon. Gentleman not decide to have a higher grade environmental impact assessment?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to get a copy of the environmental impact assessment from the Vote Office and to read it. I am advised that it more than fulfils the requirements of the Standing Order, which is the basis on which I have proposed that the environmental impact assessment should proceed. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will make some further reference to that assessment in his speech, and I look forward to that.

The guidance on the production of environmental assessments says that the promoters should consult those bodies with relevant information before preparing their statement. I understand that Cardiff Bay development corporation and my officials have consulted a wide range of interested bodies, including the NRA, Cardiff city council and the Countryside Council for Wales. It would have been a pointless duplication for the authors of the environmental statement to have consulted separately.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The problem is that the Secretary of State second-guesses the advice that he receives from his advisers. Will he confirm that the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation is the Countryside Council for Wales?. Will he also confirm that it recommended that Cardiff bay should be included in the Severn estuary special protection area? Will he tell the House why he decided to override that advice?

Mr. Hunt: I have placed in the Library a copy of the letter that I wrote explaining the issues in great detail.

An inevitable and regrettable consequence of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill is the loss of the Taff-Ely site of special scientific interest. We have never denied that there would be environmental costs—I hope that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) recognises that. Those costs had to be weighed against the economic, environmental and other benefits. Clearly, the barrage and the type of development associated with it would be incompatible with the SSSI. It is a fundamental principle of the Bill that it would enable the impoundment of a fresh water lake in place of the existing salt water tidal area. It follows that the existing site of special scientific interest could no longer be sustained.

From earlier debates, the House will know that the Nature Conservancy Council had proposed that the lower Severn estuary, of which Cardiff bay is a part, should be a special protection area under the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds. On 1 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I announced our decision—to which the hon. Member for Caerphilly referred—to exclude the area of the inland bay as defined in the Bill from further consideration as part of the area proposed as a special protection area. The reasons underlying that decision and the factors that my right hon. Friend and I took into account are fully set out in the letter of 1 November to the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

There have been understandable worries about the possible effects on houses of rises in groundwater levels once the barrage is built. The former private Bill contained detailed protective provisions in respect of groundwater. I should like to make it clear that the provisions of the Government Bill will provide householders with the same level of protection as that which existed under the private Bill, and they are set out fully in schedule 7.

I have done my best to understand and respond to the desire of people in Cardiff that the scheme should be set out in the Bill so that Parliament can consider it. However, by its very nature, the scheme is complex, and we cannot guarantee that minor difficulties may not emerge when we put it into practice. Therefore, the Bill contains a power for the Secretary of State to make regulations to amend the scheme of protection.

The reasoned amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and other Opposition Members seeks to make the point that the provisions would enable the Secretary of State to weaken the protection, which, I suppose, goes alongside the need for provisions to strengthen the protection. I wish to make it clear that I have no intention of using that power at present, but I would be prepared to use it if it emerged that individuals' interests were not being properly protected by the scheme in practice. If I decided to act in that way, any regulation to amend the scheme would be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. Therefore, the House would have the opportunity of debating any proposed changes to the scheme.

An enormous amount of detailed technical evidence on groundwater was presented during consideration of the earlier Bill. The Select Committee that examined the Bill took a very close interest in and sought several undertakings about groundwater. One such was that further detailed studies of the possible effects should be undertaken over a 12-month period. The results of those studies were published on 25 September, and on the same day I announced the start of a three-month public consultation period during which interested parties could

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make written representations to me on the contents of the reports produced by Hydrotechnica. The public consultation exercise ends on 31 December. The documents are technical, and I have arranged for them to be placed in all public libraries in Cardiff, and notices to that effect have been placed in local newspapers.

I gave the Select Committee an undertaking that I would consider the Hydrotechnica studies and the commentary produced by Cardiff Bay development corporation, and I shall do so. I shall also consider any representations received during the consultation period. I have appointed an eminent expert, Mr. Roy Stoner, the director of the Institute of Irrigation Studies at Southampton university, as my specialist groundwater adviser. Once the consultation period is over, I shall consider all the evidence.

Only if I am satisfied that the economic, safety and technical criteria relating to groundwater can be met will public funding be made available for construction of the barrage. That is the undertaking that I gave to the Select Committee. Subject to that undertaking, I am pleased to announce today that I have increased the funding planned by the corporation by £22 million, bringing provision for the next three years to £130 million. I do that in the context of the proposals in the Bill, which I believe are vital for the future of Cardiff. Accordingly, I commend the Bill to the House.

3.55 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill because of the inadequacy of the groundwater protection provisions in that the powers granted to the Secretary of State in the Bill would enable him to weaken the protections specified in the schedule, because the public consultation on the Hydrotechnica report is not yet concluded, because that consultation process has allowed no mechanism for public discussion of the report, and because the Bill makes no provision for an independent final arbiter on matters concerning the quality of the water environment in the inland bay.

There can be no doubt about the need for urban regeneration in the Cardiff docklands. The docks of Cardiff were at the centre of the coal-based prosperity of south Wales. Coal from the valleys of south Wales made Cardiff the world's leading coal-exporting port. The decline of the docks has mirrored the decline of the south Wales coal industry. Now, with fewer than 2,000 workers in our pits, Cardiff docklands must find a new identity and a new prosperity.

Cardiff has already begun a brighter future. South Glamorgan county council and Cardiff city council have sought to bring new industries and new jobs to the area. Like other responsible, Labour-controlled local authorities in Wales, they have worked in partnership with the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, the European Commission and in this case the development corporation.

Our criticism is not of the economic regeneration. Our criticism of the Bill rests on some of the ways in which the Government have approached the project, or failed to provide adequate safeguards. Indeed, the Government tried to rush a Bill through in July of this year, but the Select Committee on Procedure said no. I have been unable to find anyone who wishes to praise the private Bill procedure; it is an anachronism. Indeed, the Transport and Works Bill which will come before the House next week reflects anxiety about the operation of the private Bill system.

Our reasoned amendment centres on three clear propositions. Each relates to safeguards and protections on issues which we all agree are serious for the project. The first is groundwater. The groundwater protection provisions are inadequate in that the powers granted to the Secretary of State in the Bill would enable him to weaken the protections specified in the schedule. I refer to clause 21, which is supposed to be about reassurance. What reassurance does it give to people who might suffer damage due to a change in groundwater level when the Bill permits the Secretary of State to weaken the groundwater provisions? The Bill gives protection with one hand and takes it away with the other.

We welcome the fact that provisions have been put in the Bill. In July it was intended that they should be contained in regulations. By agreeing to their inclusion in the Bill the Secretary of State has responded to the anxieties of my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), and of South Glamorgan county council, Cardiff city council and many other bodies.

However, by retaining his flexibility of action the Secretary of State has drafted the Bill so as to allow him to weaken the necessary protections. That is unacceptable; we detect the Treasury's fingerprints in this. That is why we ask the right hon. Gentleman to give a categorical assurance to the House that at some later date cash limits will not be imposed on deserving claims for compensation. As the legislation stands and under the powers contained in clause 21(2), the Secretary of State could alter the rights of householders to cover only compensation instead of remedial work, as specified in schedule 7. He could also shorten the period in which residents could make a claim for compensation and alter the cost of a survey of buildings outside the protected property area. These are not peripheral issues; they are key issues to individuals, families and local communities.

Public consultation is our second major point of contention. On the results of the Hydrotechnica report——

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): The hon. Gentleman supported the previous private Bill. Does he want a Cardiff bay barrage to be built? Why is he trying to stop this Bill instead of amending it in Committee?

Mr. Jones: I shall state my position and that of the Opposition in my speech. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will find my remarks persuasive. He should not put words in my mouth, however, or make false assumptions. I know that his intervention was well meant and had not a whit of political mischief about it. Knowing him very well, I know that he would not rise just to dissemble.

As for public consultation——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett) *rose*——

Mr. Jones: I want to get on. The Under-Secretary will have a chance to catch Mr. Speaker's eye later, no doubt.

I was saying that the second major point of contention has to do with public consultation on the results of the Hydrotechnica report. As we debate the Bill, the period of public consultation is only halfway through. Surely arrangements should have been made to allow the Secretary of State to report to the House on the outcome of the consultations and on the advice of his expert, Mr. Roy Stoner of Southampton university, about the objections voiced during the consultation period.

The consultation period ends on 31 December and only then will the Secretary of State's consultant start to prepare his final report. We do not even know whether the Stoner report will be available to the Select Committee when it begins to sit. In any event, it is surely wrong, for the sake of a few weeks, to decide on the principle of the Bill by giving it a Second Reading while hon. Members still do not have the Stoner report.

There has been concern about and criticism of the manner in which public consultation has been undertaken. It has not allowed for public discussion or exchanges in which people can ask questions and receive answers from those who undertook the research. I agree with the Secretary of State that the matters involved are highly technical and that the Hydrotechnica report deals with matters that have been at the heart of the controversy. People want a chance to discuss the report, and the lack of debate is a serious flaw in the procedures that have been followed.

The third major element of our amendment relates to the quality of the water environment in the inland bay. Many points made during the passage of the previous, private Bill require to be considered. Not least are the problems of sewage discharge, the pollution of rivers flowing into the bay, leachate from the Ferry road tip, algal growth and fish protection. We have real reservations about the role of the Secretary of State for Wales as the final arbiter in any dispute between the National Rivers Authority and the development corporation. In that context I refer to clause 12.

The corporation may argue that a direction given to it by the National Rivers Authority to improve water is unreasonable. If that happens, the Secretary of State will be called on to adjudicate, and there is a suspicion that he would be inclined to side with the development corporation which, of course, is his creation, his creature.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The rivers that are to be dammed, the Taff and the Ely, flow through my constituency. My hon. Friend knows that the NRA has done sterling work to clean up those rivers. However, its task is made much more difficult by the fact that derogations granted to the Welsh water authority allow it to pump raw sewage into both those rivers. If a lake is built behind the barrage, it will be nothing more than a sewage pit. How does the Secretary of State propose to tackle that problem?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend's point is central to the debate and I am sure that the matter will be pressed hard in Committee.

It would be unwise to allow even the possibility of criticism on a matter as important as adjudication. Therefore, there should be expert, independent adjudication in any such dispute, either by arbitration or by an appropriate expert body. That would mean that even if the final decision rested with the Secretary of State he would be seen by all concerned parties to be basing his judgment on neutral, expert scientific advice.

Not only is there a lack of independence in determining the quality of the water environment but the Bill ignores the statutory role of Cardiff city council as public health authority or port health authority. Clause 70 of the previous Bill required the undertakers to install monitoring apparatus to monitor water level and quality for infectious diseases. All records were to be available to Cardiff city council to allow it to discharge its statutory responsibilities. The Bill disregards the statutory role of local authorities with regard to impounded water and that can only be to the detriment of local people.

Not the least of our criticisms of the Government's approach relates to the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which is unelected and unaccountable and has too often been insensitive to the concerns of local communities. It is a creature of the Secretary of State for Wales and the right hon. Gentleman has shown that its first responsibility is to him and not to the local community. We saw that only a few months ago when the right hon. Gentleman vetoed the appointment of a Labour city councillor in favour of the appointment of his Tory placeman. The imposition of councillor Jeff Sainsbury says much about the right hon. Gentleman and about the unrepresentative character of the development corporation.

The appointment also says much about quango politics in Conservative Wales. A man who knows more than most about quangos is the chairman of the development corporation. It is surely unique in Britain for a failed Conservative candidate to be chairman of not one but two quangos. I do not blame those involved in the development corporation, particularly the five council members who are in a minority on the board. At least they have won an election for their seats on the council. The development corporation is a creature of the Conservative Government, who clearly do not trust democracy in operation in Wales. They claim to support democracy in other parts of the world, but in Wales local communities cannot choose how best to regenerate their local economies.

That there was no need for this artificial regeneration is shown by the successful regenerations of central Cardiff, spearheaded by Cardiff city council, and of the Atlantic wharf area, spearheaded by South Glamorgan county council. Both were achieved in partnership with other public agencies and the public itself.

Mr. David Hunt: I sensed that the hon. Gentleman was coming to the conclusion of his speech. He has not yet come off the fence and told us whether he supports the barrage project.

Mr. Jones: The detail of my speech made it far more informative than that of the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman is in a feeble position. He has had to come to the House with the Bill because he was unable to deliver. I understand that he wrote to all members of the Cabinet asking them to turn up and support him in the votes after previous debates on this project. However, he was not able to get enough Cabinet members to support him. He has a lot of ground to make up before he can criticise the Opposition.

[Mr. Jones]

The Opposition always deal with the arguments. We shall press to a vote our reasoned amendment, which will redress three important issues. I urge the Secretary of State to accept the validity of the argument set out in the amendment.

4.15 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), I support the redevelopment of Cardiff docks. The area has made a unique contribution to Welsh commerce and to Welsh culture, not least because it produced Shirley Bassey, among others. It would be churlish if I or anyone else were to say that the area should not receive whatever funds are needed to redevelop it.

We are, however, debating the wisdom of building a barrage. I do not think that there is anyone in the Chamber who would deny that the area of Cardiff docks needs redevelopment; the question is whether there should be redevelopment by means of impounding the Rivers Taff and Ely. Cardiff bay has a great deal to offer Wales in the way of prestige projects, for example. It is directly to the south of the hub of administrative Wales—the capital city of the Principality. There are already several institutions of which we can be proud, and I understand that Cardiff may have a centre for the performing arts in the form of a new opera house. I am sure that we would all be proud of that. I hope that such a project will be a centre for other arts, too.

At Pierhead there is a science centre called Techniquest, which attracts about 100,000 people a year. Those who are involved with it want to move to larger premises. They have plans to incorporate a science park in an area of about 135,000 sq ft. We have seen Welsh industry change. There has been a transformation in the economy of Wales, which is now as much electronics and science based as it is steel and coal based. The science project to which I have referred could be a great flagship for Welsh industry, for Welsh commerce and for British science generally.

Why does not the Secretary of State for Wales wave the flag for Pierhead and say that the new project could become a great science centre? I understand that others will try to grab it. Apparently Bradford is interested in having it and Bristol has also made noises about it. There is already a wonderful location for a new science centre to be developed. I should like to see the new Techniquest look out across a natural estuary that has seen the tide rise and fall for a million years. I should like to see the rivers that flow into the estuary—and indeed the entire Bristol channel—cleaned. Those are monumental tasks, but they are imaginative ones.

It seems that we would be much better off if we spent money not on constructing a barrage but on cleaning up the various sewage works that I have castigated over the years. It would be well worth spending money on such a project. We would be giving future generations an inheritance of which we could be proud, and which we would surely be proud to pass on. I am worried that, instead, we shall be handing over a barrage that will do little apart from create what is hoped to be an aesthetically pleasing impounded area of water. Such projects were popular constructions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and I am worried that once again the Welsh Office is trying to catch up with a fashion or a phase that has passed. Instead, we should be in tune with what is happening environmentally in the most progressive countries in Europe and throughout the world.

We should give thought to cleaning up the environment generally. We could be proud of such an achievement because the tide could flow in and out, the natural environment would be enhanced, and the flora and fauna would flourish close to the heart of our great capital city. Instead, it seems that money is to be spent in an almost futile attempt to attract to the bay, at a time of recession, companies and start-up projects that, by rights, should be located elsewhere.

I refer, for example, to the Welsh health common services authority which, under the leadership of Brigadier Peter Crawley, decided that it would locate in the bay rather than at Merthyr Tydfil or some other place along the A470—or even at the refurbished BBC studios building at Gabalfa, which is where we all thought that authority would go. Instead, there was an announcement, accompanied by a great hoo-hah, that the authority and its 800 jobs would be moving to the bay.

I am not saying that that had anything to do with the fact that Brigadier Crawley was in the same regiment as Lieutenant-Colonel Inkin, who is the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. On inquiring about the matter, I was told that the health common services authority had decided to move to the bay because it had been told by an independent property consultancy that it was a much better choice of location than anywhere else.

It turns out that the independent property consultancy was none other than a subsidiary of the national ports authority, which is a major shareholder in the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The Secretary of State has a duty to tell the House why that decision was made. Did it come as a sudden revelation and a flash of light to Brigadier Crawley, or was it that the development corporation, with its vast capital expenditure, needed a prestige project to give it credence in the eyes of the commercial world?

This is not the politics of jealousy from those of us who worry about such matters. We are glad to see the bay being redeveloped, and hope that it will be a great success.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): Before the hon. Gentleman moves on from his point about the proposal to locate the health common services authority in the old BBC offices at Gabalfa, perhaps I may take some credit for that not having come to pass. There was great resentment among my constituents on the Three Horseshoes estate at that suggestion, which they feared would dramatically worsen the quality of their lives. Apart from the traffic implications in grid-locking the roads of Caerphilly, up Manor way, it might even have had repercussions for the hon. Gentleman's constituents. I certainly lobbied against the authority making that move, and if I played any part in influencing its choice of the bay instead, I am very pleased at that outcome.

Dr. Howells: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful intervention. I am sure that that proposal would have affected the lives of my constituents. More of them would have obtained jobs. There is still planning permission for the Gabalfa office development, so someone will move there. It would have been nice if the health common services authority had sone so—and created 800 jobs. I

would rather have seen it move to Merthyr Tydfil, Brecon, or anywhere else, because it is an authority for Wales. According to the Secretary of State, companies are queuing up to move to the bay, but there seems to be no proof of that.

I concede that the current recession and the Government's mismanagement of the economy have a part to play in the fact that prestige projects are not lining up to locate in the bay. My concern is why the health common services authority, with its 800 valuable jobs, should suddenly decide to change direction and head for the bay. That seems to be a face-saving exercise rather than one that makes any sense in administrative or traffic terms —as the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) said.

As that hon. Gentleman knows, journeying to and from the bay at the moment is appalling. One has to travel through the middle of Cardiff, or through a curious maze that takes one off the western approaches, along the new dockland link road. It may be that in future the bay area's traffic needs will be better served. I have no doubt that they will. I also hope that the hon. Gentleman will press for better traffic arrangements for the rest of us, on the A470 and everywhere else.

Mr. Rowlands: I had not realised that other sites had been considered, including Merthyr. Does my hon. Friend know the comparative costs involved?

Dr. Howells: As most Cardiff property developers know, in the docklands the average annual rent is about £14·50 per sq ft, while it is under £10 in Merthyr. I am worried about other costs, such as the cost of fitting out offices. Whence came the inducements for the move down to the docks? I fear that they will eventually prove to have come from the Welsh Office, via the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Who will provide the £1 million or £2 million for the offices to be fitted out? I understand that they have not even been built yet.

Many of us are keen for the bay to be redeveloped, and are glad to note that low-cost housing is being provided there. We are still worried about the groundwater mystery, however. I shall not attempt to express an opinion, but I well remember a very good party that was held in our front room in Portmanmoor road, Splott, back in 1970. About 50 paisley-shirted individuals suddenly found themselves up to their knees in wet mud. The floor had collapsed—people danced a good deal harder in those days, as the Secretary of State will no doubt remember.

Cardiff was, of course, built on mud flats, and nature takes a long time to change. Problems will be caused by sewage flowing down the Taff and the Ely into the bay. At least I know something about such problems; they were my original reason for opposing the scheme, and I have not changed my mind in the slightest. Ultimately, the people of Cardiff must decide, but they have good representatives in the House who are capable of making the right decision.

Many of us who represent the valleys would like the same amount of money to be spent on matters other than the bay, which has no God-given right to it. Although I am pleased to note that the money is designed to prime the pump of private capital, I see no evidence of that as yet. I hope that the House will support the reasoned amendment, and that the whole project can be examined properly and thoroughly.

4.27 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As the Secretary of State has said, today's debate is to some extent a re-run of the debate that took place on 16 April, and we shall be deploying some of the same arguments. As on 16 April, we shall be voting at 7 o'clock, but this time it will be 7 pm rather than 7 am.

This could be described as a hybrid Bill and, in a sense, we are considering two questions at the same time. The first is whether the barrage should be given funds, and the second is whether, if someone else's money and ideas were involved, the development should be given permission to proceed. If the decisions were being made by a planning inquiry and we were the planning inspectors, would we give permission for the spending of someone else's money on such as project? Has it proved itself sufficiently?

We shall vote against the Government's proposals. Our reason for doing that is stated in the amendment: there are still a large number of unanswered questions.

It is difficult for Opposition Members to say that there is no problem and that money can be spent because the general tide of expert opinion is in the Government's favour. In fact, the general tide of expert opinion is deeply divided. Geologists and civil engineers who have worked for the Cardiff Bay development corporation as consultants have in general been willing to give the green light to the package. We do not know, however, what other experts will say. They have not yet reported. The Secretary of State's own consultant, Mr. Roy Stoner, the head of the Institute of Irrigation Studies at Southampton university, has not yet reported and we do not know what he will say. I noted that the Secretary of State omitted to refer to the date when he will be able to tell the House about Mr. Stoner's opinion.

I had imagined that if the Secretary of State was interested in doing his job properly he would have said to us, "Mr. Stoner's opinion will be made available to the first meeting of the Select Committee." I do not know whether the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will tell us when Mr. Stoner's report will be made available.

There are also the geologists and civil engineers who gave evidence for Cardiff residents against the barrage during the Select Committee stage of the proceedings on the private Bill in February, April and May of last year. One of them—Dr. John Miles from the civil engineering department of the University college Cardiff—stated that there was a danger that parts of low-lying Cardiff could be turned into an urban slum. That somewhat chilling prediction was made in the presence of the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Sir G. Neale), who was here to listen to the opening speeches but who is not here now. When a highly qualified professional makes such a dire prediction, one has to sit up and take notice. If the geologists are divided, it is not surprising that the politicians will also be divided.

The Select Committee's recommendations have been complied with, in that a further 12 months of groundwater studies have been carried out. The firm that carried out those studies was designated by the Select Committee—Hydrotechnica—but there has been much dispute about the way in which the 12 months' study was carried out. It was understood on both sides of the geological and civil engineering argument that the 12-month period was the absolute minimum and that what was required was a full 12-month reading of the boreholes on a four-seasons basis.

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

The borehole readings were very sporadic. Most of them were not sunk in the first three months, let alone at the beginning of the 12-month period so that a full set of four seasons rainfall readings could be obtained in order to work out exactly how the groundwater flows under the low-lying areas of Cardiff that would be affected. A model could then have been constructed to show what would happen during periods of heavy rainfall after the construction of the barrage.

While the geological experts are still arguing among themselves, the Secretary of State should not be too surprised that Opposition politicians are unwilling to give the scheme the green light. He cannot expect us to say, "We know that some geologists and civil engineers still oppose the scheme, but it does not matter whether they are right or wrong, so long as some geologists and some civil engineers are willing to give it the greeen light." The Opposition's job is to scrutinise critically the Government's proposals. We are waiting, therefore, for the geologists and civil engineers who have studied the scheme closely to come to a unanimous opinion and say that they are prepared to give the barrage the green light. That has not yet happened.

May I mention the water budget for the development? Some hon. Members may wonder what a water budget is and may not think that that question is worthy of the Secretary of State's attention, but it is critical because the Rivers Taff and Ely are flashy. The difference between their minimum and maximum flows is greater than that of any other river. Water runs straight off the coalfield plateau into the Ely and off the Brecon Beacons into the slightly longer Taff. A flow in a dry summer of 3 cu m per second and in flood conditions of 8 or 9 cu m per second leads to a staggering difference between the constituents of the water entering the lake. Somehow, the system must encompass the high flows in January and February or severe rain storms and the low flows when both rivers reduce almost to a trickle in dry August.

The water budget becomes critical because the fish pass must be operated to the satisfaction of the National Rivers Authority, the sluices must allow salmon to remigrate to head waters for spawning purposes, the boat lock must allow people to get into the Bristol channel, the sluices must flush out salt water that entered the lake while the boat lock was in operation and, finally—this is the major fly in the ointment—Associated British Ports has the right to abstract 4 cu m per second at Blackweir.

Has the Secretary of State negotiated a deal with Associated British Ports whereby it gives up some of its rights to abstract water at Blackweir, which it uses to top up the commercial dock? Associated British Ports inherited the Marquis of Bute's legacy and has the right to abstract virtually all the water that flows down the Taff in the summer. Unless it gives up those rights, insufficient water will enter the lake to operate the fish pass, the boat lock and salt water flushing.

I am aware that the Secretary of State has given the NRA an assurance that before the Bill is enacted the Government will get ABP to sacrifice some of its abstraction rights at Blackweir, but the right hon. Gentleman has not yet persuaded or paid Associated British Ports the sum required to reduce those rights. Therefore, he is not in a position to tell the House that water quality in the bay can be assured. Without ABP's right to abstract water being reduced from 4 cu m per second to, say, 1 cu m per second, the fish pass will not be operated to the satisfaction of the NRA and the boat lock will not be operated to the satisfaction of members of Cardiff yacht club. In a dry summer, everybody will want to sail in the Bristol channel, but the NRA will tell Cardiff bay development corporation, "You cannot use the boat lock because we need the water for the fish pass."

Will the Secretary of State assure the House that that job has been done? Perhaps the Under-Secretary—I see that some negotiations are going on—will tell us something about that; so far we have heard nothing. I was rather disappointed that the Secretary of State did not deal with that point.

The other important general principle that we are asking about, which the Secretary of State did not mention, is the development proposals that he expects for Cardiff bay—with or without a barrage. The proposition that he is putting to the House is that, without a barrage, there will be little or no development, but with a barrage there will be intensive development and many jobs. The only development that we heard about today was from my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), who referred to the new office development by the Welsh health common services authority at the Roath basin. That decision was made recently. Some 800 people will be accommodated when the office block is built. Perhaps that is part of the deal with ABP, making it give up some of its water abstraction rights in return for being the landlord through its subsidiary, Grosvenor Waterside. I hope that we will be given more details about that development.

Much more important, the Secretary of State failed to mention Cardiff university's proposals to occupy a semi-derelict site adjoining the new county hall, between Bute street and the city centre. Are such developments dependent on the barrage? Could development go ahead anyway, but without some of the risks inherent in a barrage?

I should like the Under-Secretary to comment on the university's proposals to relocate Cardiff business school and the economics faculty as well as 12 student halls of residence and about 400 houses for graduate students and married students. If that development went ahead, it would make a colossal difference to whether a barrage is needed to bring about development and to whether the most speedy and most job-productive way of developing Cardiff bay is by developing from the city centre southwards or from the barrage north towards the city centre. Many developers in Cardiff believe that there should be development from the city centre southwards, through Tarmac's South crescent proposal, linked with the university's proposals.

Universities will expand massively in the future. I think that the hon. Members for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) would agree that a developer is unlikely to find the land necessary for expansion of the university anywhere north of the city centre. South of the centre may well be the most appropriate place. We need more information. We do not want an information vacuum in the House when we are deciding on the principle of such a major proposal. I am disappointed that the Secretary of State did not touch on those questions.

I should like also to criticise the use to which Cardiff Bay development corporation has put its massive

advertising budget. Given that the House of Commons is about to make a major decision and that the public are being consulted in Cardiff, we do not believe that it is democratic for the development corporation to launch into a massive advertising campaign costing £2 million.

The development corporation initially said that that money would be spent in key signboard areas such as Swindon, along the M4, at Bristol Parkway station, in Paddington and elsewhere in London. I am not against advertising "Come to Cardiff", but half the advertising budget seems to be spent in Cardiff. That raises the question whether the purpose of the advertising budget is to bias debate. Money is being splashed all over prominent advertising sites in Cardiff while there is public consultation to try to ensure that the development corporation is seen in a more positive light.

One does not attract inward investment to Cardiff in the city itself; one attracts it from Bristol, London or elsewhere. It appears that much of the advertising budget is used in an anti-democratic fashion to bias public debate in Cardiff. That is a completely inappropriate use of money. The Secretary of State is probably aware that the Advertising Standards Authority has been asked to rule on whether it is an offence massively to advertise a development that is to be debated in the House of Commons. Perhaps the Under-Secretary, whose idea it may have been to advertise on this flash basis before this debate, can tell us whether this beloved anti-democratic procedure is one of his wizard wheezes.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Does the hon. Gentleman like it?

Mr. Morgan: It is a matter not of whether I like it but of whether Pembroke constituents like it.

Seven questions remain unanswered, and that is why I shall enthusiastically go into the Division Lobby in support of the reasoned amendment. Those questions should have been answered before Second Reading.

First, does the Secretary of State believe that the geologists and civil engineers, Dr. John Miles, Dr. Stewart Noake and Dr. Gordon Saunders, are wrong in their urban swamp thesis?

Secondly, will the Government encourage the university developments in the central section, linking the city centre and Pierhead?

Thirdly, what is the verdict of the Secretary of State and of Cardiff Bay development corporation on the Ferry road tip being removed or remaining in place? The right hon. Gentlemen did not say anything about that. First the tip was to be moved, then half was to be moved and then none was to be moved. Will it be moved? The Secretary of State will be aware of the massive consequences that has in terms of potential pollution of the water and the economic case for redevelopment of the western side of Cardiff bay.

Fourthly, has ABP agreed to give up some of its rights to water abstraction in Cardiff bay? If not, how will ABP satisfy the NRA that there is a scheme to manage water supplies during dry summers?

Fifthly, why did the Secretary of State allow an environmental impact assessment to be carried out by Liverpool university's environmental associates without any reference to the NRA and to Cardiff city council's environmental health office? When I intervened, the right hon. Gentleman gave an unsatisfactory reply. The matter is in his hands. If he says that an environmental impact assessment should be carried out under the principles of annex 1, the matter must be referred to the appropriate regulatory agencies. It is not adequate to say that the matter was referred to Cardiff Bay development corporation and that it had spoken to the NRA and the city council's environmental health office. If the Secretary of State had said that an environmental impact assessment had to be carried out under the principles of annex 1, so it had to be referred to the regulatory agencies, that would have been done. The right hon. Gentleman must not shirk his responsibility.

My sixth question was raised in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). What will happen if there is a judicial review or a review via the European Commission, and possibly the European Court of Justice, of the exclusion of the Cardiff bay site of special scientific interest from the special protection area of the lower Severn estuary? If that is not an important issue, the Secretary of State should tell us why he made such a fuss about sending a posse of lawyers to observe the Leybucht bay case in Luxembourg last year. A lot of public money was spent to send those lawyers there. If the verdict did not matter, the right hon. Gentleman should repay that money to the National Audit Office. I shall ensure that the NAO investigates whether that was wholly improper expenditure incurred in observing a case which had no influence on the proceedings of the House and whose findings he intended anyway to spirit away with a wave of his magic wand. If the matter is important, the Secretary of State should explain whether this major legal issue remains to be settled.

The seventh question was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd. The Secretary of State has not referred to the development possibilities for the opera house at Pierhead. He made a statement to the press saying that he was organising a major engineering and feasibility study of the proposal. I should have thought that it was appropriate to say something about what progress has been made—about whether engineering problems have been discovered or whether the right hon. Gentleman is jibbing because he cannot get any private sector support and industry will not back the proposal. This matter is material to the development prospects in the area.

Mr. David Hunt: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's seven questions. I counted 21 questions, but I shall try to deal with seven. I shall respond in detail in writing and place a copy of my letter before the House. In return, will the hon. Gentleman answer my questions: in principle, is he in favour of the Cardiff bay barrage and will he seek to oppose Second Reading once the reasoned amendment has been disposed of?

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for asking that question. However, the question does not arise, as we do not yet know what the Government will do about our reasoned amendment. The Secretary of State is in a similar position to us. He must remember that he cannot approve a Second Reading if it means giving immediate approval to the barrage. He must wait until he receives the Stoner report. He said that until he received that report he was unable to give the go-ahead to the barrage. Therefore, I do not know why he is attempting to come the raw prawn with the House as if he knew what he was going to do but nobody else did. That gives a biased view and is a complete misstatement of the facts. He

[Mr. Morgan]

cannot put the House right and say that if we all agree with him the barrage can be started straight away. He is not in a position to do that, which is why the debate should be held in late January when we would have the advantage of having read the Stoner report. Without it, there is every reason for all hon. Members to join us and to back our reasoned amendment.

4.50 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) made a number of valid points at the end of his speech about why now is the wrong time to debate this issue. Cardiff bay could be a huge opportunity or an environmental disaster; it could be an employment haven or it could be anti-community; it could mean houses being flooded or it could result in sparkling new skyscrapers. There are many different scenarios.

Mr Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Livsey: I shall not give way at this early stage.

There must be a way through for a scheme to revitalise the docks area of Cardiff but I am sad to say that it appears that this version of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill—the reasoned amendment points out some of its weaknesses—is not it. The Bill is short and it appears that the safeguards that it contains are not entirely adequate. Indeed, it does not carry sufficient groundwater guarantees.

We do not oppose the barrage in principle but we are unhappy about many aspects of the issue. For some reason, the fashion in barrages is adversely affecting my constituency. There is a barrage on the River Tawe at Swansea. That river flows out of my constituency. There is a barrage proposed for the River Taff which also flows out of my constituency. There might be a barrage on the River Usk, which is also a major river flowing out of my constituency. It appears that only the River Wye will have an open flow into the Severn estuary.

Dr. Kim Howells: Give it time.

Mr. Livsey: Indeed, give it time. Eventually that may also be blocked.

Whether we want all of these barrages is an important environmental issue for the whole of south Wales to consider. The costs and on costs of a barrage across the Taff—or certainly the maintenance costs—could amount to £150 million a year according to some of the more pessimistic views. If that is the case, one could say that the £150 million would be better spent in attracting more business to Cardiff without a barrage but possibly with better transport systems or other similar ideas.

The present barrage proposal might not necessarily be essential for the redevelopment of Cardiff bay, which was the point made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). Perhaps a little mud will not put people off investing in the area and that money could still flow in.

There is also a strong environmental factor. The Government agency—the Cardiff Bay development corporation—may be the first body to destroy a site of special scientific interest. That is worth serious consideration. The main objections at the moment involve groundwater. The report by Hydrotechnica has not been available long enough to receive proper consideration. That is an important point because there are other reports in the pipeline which have not yet been published but without which the House cannot give proper consideration to the background of scientific information which could perhaps make us more able to take objective decisions.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because at the beginning of his speech he made some rather outrageous remarks about the dangers of flooding. We must be very careful and responsible in the House about the way in which we deal with such issues. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence to support what he said, I hope that he will give us the benefit of it. While doing so perhaps he will tell us whether in raising such a range of objections he is speaking for his party. Some of his colleagues have previously been helpful and supportive of the Bill and we thought that the one or two people in Grangetown who came out against the barrage during the local elections were an aberration among the Liberal Democrats. Indeed, they did very badly as a result of coming out against the barrage at that time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will enlighten us.

Mr. Livsey: I shall certainly not give a diatribe about the internal politics of Cardiff but I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is a 65 in. rainfall in the Brecon Beacons which might have some impact on flooding around Cardiff bay. That is evidence which one ignores at one's peril.

The bases of sewers in the Cardiff bay area is a serious issue. The fact that large parts of Cardiff were built on made ground in the Grangetown and Riverside area makes analysis difficult and, for the purposes of modelling, very difficult. Some residents are worried that at present there does not appear to be allowance for compensation for damage to property in areas outside the designated area. Many elderly people living in such areas may have to take precautionary measures such as putting damp courses in their houses.

Issues surrounding the Hydrotechnica report need careful analysis. The report has so far failed to produce a model that represents the historical behaviour in terms of time variant water level movement and flows. It seems that most of Hydrotechnica's efforts have been directed towards solving the computer problems that it has met in the modelling. That gives rise to some fears about the report.

One factor causing unease at present and which the Secretary of State must take into account is that, from evidence given to it, the Select Committee stressed in its recommendations that a year was the minimum time necessary to study the impact of a one-year cycle of groundwater. Unfortunately, despite the statements made to the Select Committee and subsequently to the various meetings held by the Cardiff Bay development corporation and others, the attempts during the 12-month period to collect data have been half hearted. From the evidence, it appears that sewer flow data are available only for a very short period, from February 1991 to early April. That is a total of about five weeks out of a possible 52 recommended for the study. Similarly, the approach to understanding the made ground was tardy and data were collected for only

one month in July 1991. For those reasons, one must have reservations about whether we have sufficient data to make an objective judgment on the Cardiff bay barrage.

Water quality and pollution are also serious worries in terms of the Taff and of the Ely. The probability of algae blooms occurring and the possibility of that creating a health hazard must be taken into account. The National Rivers Authority's computer model suggests that there will be a bad algal problem—possibly the worst in Britain—in the inland water behind the barrage. That could preclude water sports and could create a serious midge problem and it may be necessary to deploy anti-midge chemicals to control the problem.

I am naturally concerned about the efficacy of the fish passes on the Taff. Salmon, of course, find it difficult to arrive in one piece after going up the valleys because they face many hazards there. None the less, it would be a good idea to give them a chance. The fish pass is an important aspect and it must be properly designed. I trust that the NRA is studying the matter carefully. The provisions concerning bird life in the bay area have had close analysis and do not seem to be entirely adequate.

It would be better to debate the Bill next year because a debate then would be better informed. The idea of the barrage could be good, but we must be certain that all safeguards are in place. It would be better to have a proper, informed debate when all the reports are on the table, when we can all read those reports and when we can come to some conclusions as a result.

5.2 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) reassured our hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that those of us who represent Cardiff constituencies fully supported the redevelopment of Cardiff. I reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that I wish Cardiff city council and the development corporation well in their attempts to rejuvenate Cardiff and to provide employment and housing in the derelict area of Cardiff. There is no question of reservations on our part about the necessity of the work being done for the redevelopment of Cardiff.

However, we have some reservations—I have three—about the way in which the work is being conducted. First, I am sad that a development corporation is in place. I would far rather that the decisions were taken by people who were accountable to the public under a proper system of democracy. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) made clear his reservations about the way in which the corporation works.

Secondly, I have reservations about the fact that the development corporation seems to have an endless pit from which to draw resources. We know that money is being splashed about in a variety of ways. I do not begrudge Cardiff that expenditure, but I begrudge the fact that my constituency is denied such largesse, and does not have a fair dip in the pool.

Thirdly, I regret the way in which the Welsh Office's spending priorities have been distorted by its fanaticism about putting all the resources into south Cardiff. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd mentioned the way in which Welsh Office expenditure on the national health service had been twisted. I am conscious of the way in which transport expenditure has been skewed towards South Glamorgan. I do not begrudge South Glamorgan receiving that money, but I begrudge the fact that South Glamorgan is receiving the money whereas my county of Mid Glamorgan is not. Over the past four or five years, on the basis of per capita comparisons, Mid Glamorgan has done badly.

With the rundown of basic industries in Mid Glamorgan, we need a proper transport system and a proper infrastructure. We are being doubly disadvantaged by being denied access to reasonable investment in transport and by having to compete with South Glamorgan, which has all the advantages in terms of investment. That makes life difficult for us in the valley communities.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill replaces the private Bill which fell in the previous Session. He rather unkindly implied that there was something undemocratic about the defeat of the private Bill.

Mr. David Hunt *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: I am glad to see the Secretary of State shaking his head. I presume that he is denying that he implied that there was anything undemocratic. However, he said on two or three occasions that the private Bill was killed off by a minority——

Mr. Hunt: Blocked.

Mr. Davies: Blocked. The implication is that we somehow subverted the democratic process. I am glad that the Secretary of State is not making that allegation. What point was he trying to make when he emhasised that a "minority" had stopped the Bill proceeding through the House?

Mr. Hunt: I was objecting to the fact that Opposition Members, who were comparatively few in number, had used the democratic process to block the Bill.

Mr. Davies: I fail to see what point the right hon. Gentleman is trying to make. The defeat of the private Bill showed that the Secretary of State carries little clout in the Cabinet. We all know that he tried diligently to get Conservative Members to be present that night so that the Bill would go through. We all know that a three-line Whip operated—[HON MEMBERS: "It did not."] The evidence is in the report of the debate on that April night. I will not rehearse the arguments now.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), who was so pious in his condemnation of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd, could not manage to get his act together and vote in a crucial Division. The hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), who challenged my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), could not be bothered to vote on that night. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) could not be bothered to vote. Before the Secretary of State throws around allegations about minorities, he should ask where his hon. Friends were that night when the Government's failure to deliver a majority caused the Bill to be defeated.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I will give way, although I want to make progress because other hon. Friends wish to speak.

Mr. Rogers: I hope that my hon. Friend will carry on.

Mr. Davies: The private Bill procedure is inadequate. I am glad that the Secretary of State acknowledged that we used the democratic process. There can be no criticism of us for that. It was abundantly clear from the time when the Bill was introduced that several of us had deep-rooted objections. It was proper for us to use the procedures of the House to achieve the outcome that we wanted.

The Secretary of State mentioned that the process will be reviewed. I hope that the lesson of the Cardiff bay barrage does not result in a new system which is equally at fault being imposed on us. There is a grave danger that a system will be introduced under which private Bills—and we all understand the purpose of private Bills and the fact that they serve a private financial interest—will be pushed through the House at the behest of the Government. That should concern us all, regardless of where we stand in the debate on the Cardiff bay barrage.

We know that, over the years, the Government have subverted the private Bill procedure for their own purposes. One valid parallel with today's proceedings is the great battle—if I can use that expression—that took place in the previous Parliament on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, which was presented to Parliament in 1985. Between 1985 and 1988, that Bill was subject to fierce rearguard action by hon. Members who represent the mining group and those of us who are in the conservation lobby. The Bill was designed to destroy a site of special scientific interest on the Orwell estuary known as the Fagbury flats, which were home to about 15,000 waders. It was an extremely important international site for wildlife.

The Felixstowe Docks and Railway Company presented the Bill to override the protection given to the SSSI by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It wanted to extend the docks up the Orwell, which would destroy that site. The Secretary of State of the time approved the scheme—we did not have to have an environmental impact assessment—on the basis of his assertion that the benefits to the national economy outweighed the damage to an internationally important wildlife site. That is precisely the same argument as was put to us by the Secretary of State today.

The Felixstowe docks were subject to certain exemptions at the time of the Bill. They were not subject to the normal restrictive practices that operated in the docks and it was not part of the national dock labour scheme—*[Interruption.]* I shall explain the importance of that to the Secretary of State in a moment. Those exemptions gave temporary advantages to the docks. However, the judgment of the then Secretary of State was based on the need to allow those docks to expand to benefit from those advantages.

The Government then removed the advantages that the Felixstowe docks once had. They got rid of the national dock labour scheme and, shortly after the Bill was enacted, the docks started to lose their commercial advantage. By the time the SSSI was destroyed, Felixstowe had lost all such advantages. What happened? the port started to lose trade and all the major operators transferred their services from Felixstowe. More than 100 jobs at the port were lost.

The Bill destroyed an SSSI that was an internationally important wildlife site. That private Bill had been whipped through on the champagne vote when—*[Interruption.]* The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was not in the House at the time of those votes, so I do not know what he is laughing about. I can assure him that champagne parties were held across the road from the Chamber at 8 o'clock in the morning to ensure that his colleagues voted on Report.

The Government subverted the democratic process in the 1980s and today's Bill is a direct parallel of their previous behaviour. The Secretary of State cannot have it both ways and he must accept the lessons from the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-Wales): I understood the hon. Gentleman to say that the dock labour scheme so effectively sabotaged all the other ports in the country—as my colleagues and I consistently said—that Felixstowe derived immense benefit from being out of it. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that, once that scheme was abolished in other ports, Felixstowe lost its unique advantage.

Mr. Davies: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman if that is the best that he can make of the argument. The hon. Gentleman knows that the rationale behind that Bill was to capitalise on the special advantages Felixstowe gained because it was outwith the national dock labour scheme. Of course, when the Government abolished that scheme, Felixstowe lost that advantage, but by that time the damage had been done. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend has mentioned the parallels with Felixstowe. Does he agree with me that one can also detect the hand of Associated British Ports in the Bill before us? Part of the objection to the Cardiff bay barrage development is the huge financial benefits that Associated British Ports, a private company, will receive as a result of the expenditure of an enormous amount of public money. Besides being a large contributor to the Conservative party, that company has had its hand in many tills. Its chairman, a former Secretary of State for Wales, set the ball rolling some years ago so that the company could maximise its land holdings in the city of Cardiff to the detriment of the residents.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is a far better student than I of the intricacies of Associated British Ports and and his intervention establishes the case beyond doubt.

The Secretary of State has claimed that a balance must be struck between the economic gains to be had from any proposed development and the environmental losses. I accept that; it is at the heart of the debate about Cardiff bay. We must decide whether we attach greater importance to the perceived economic gains or to the need to protect a fragile environment. It is a pity that the case must be determined by assertion. The Secretary of State has asserted that the economic case outweighs the environmental case. However, if we are to benefit from past four years' debates on Cardiff bay and avoid this sort of wrangle in the future, we must have a mechanism to provide a better evaluation of the relative merits of economic gain as opposed to environmental loss. It is a pity that we have not developed that mechanism.

We no longer have a national strategy for the protection of our environment. Following the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there was a bipartisan agreement on the way in which our environment should be protected. In the past two years, however, that agreement has been reneged on by the Government. They cynically destroyed

that agreement when they decided that the Nature Conservancy Council, the Government's advisory body, was to be broken up and put under political control.

However, the Secretary of State has got the tiger by the tail. He set up the Countryside Council for Wales, which was charged with the responsibility of giving him objective scientific advice, but now that he sees fit not to accept that objective scientific advice, he sets it to one side. Earlier, I challenged the Secretary of State to justify that act. It appears that the right hon. Gentleman does not understand the importance of his decision. He does not appreciate that he has set a precedent by setting aside the objective scientific guidance provided by the Countryside Council for Wales.

It is important to put on record the view of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It wrote to the Secretary of State after he had overridden the advice of the Countryside Council and it set out its objections. The Secretary of State announced his decision about the special protection area at Cardiff bay on 1 November in a press release and the RSPB sent a letter in response which stated:

"First, your letter dwells on the relative number of birds occurring in Cardiff Bay compared to the Severn as a whole, and on the relative areas involved. Estuarine ecosystems, such as those making up the Severn are not discrete and separate: each component part is integral to the interest of the whole. Birds 'displaced' by destruction of the Taff/Ely estuary cannot simply be accommodated elsewhere in the Severn: food supply and competition factors would prevent this . . . It was the view put formally to your Department by NCC in March 1990 when they advised that Cardiff Bay was (and is) an integral part of the area which should be designated as SPA. A view subsequently confirmed by the JnCC . . . Secondly, the Leybucht judgment is cited. We consider that the way it is prayed in aid of this decision subverts the intent of the Directive, which is to safeguard a sufficiency of sites (SPA's) so as to maintain bird numbers. It is not tenable to react by seeking to justify refusal to designate sites or parts of sites by changing the accepted scientific approach to site selection, simply because they are controversial. The RSPB fears that this attitude will blight conservation action on a significant part of the UK's internationally important wildlife resources in future."

It is worth spending a moment to consider the logic of the Secretary of State's decision. More than 10 years ago Cardiff bay was selected as a part of the generally important Severn estuary that deserved special protection due to its over-wintering wildlife. On that basis it was designated an SSSI. In 1990, the Government's advisers recommended that, not only should Cardiff bay be protected but, due to its general importance, the whole of the Severn estuary should be included as a special protection area.

Now, the Secretary of State has turned logic on its head. He has said that the estuary as a whole will be an SPA, but the specific district that merited special protection 10 or 12 years ago should be excluded from the overall protection offered the estuary. If that decision is not challenged in the courts, I do not know what will be. The Secretary of State has done himself a disservice. It would have been better if he had accepted the case for designation, but said that he still believed that the economic case was overwhelming and, on that basis, the Government were prepared to make an environmental sacrifice. However, the Secretary of State seems to be trying to cheat on the rules.

I shall now consider the latest development at a European level to standardise protection. At the Hague, between 19 and 21 November, there was a conference on European coastal conservation. The Government were represented at the conference and were signatories to its three major conclusions. The first stated:

"that there is an urgent need to adopt and implement a European strategy for integrated planning and management of all European coastal zones based on the principles of sustainability and sound ecological and environmental practice".

There can be no conceivable circumstances in which the development proposed for Cardiff bay meets any of those criteria.

The conclusions continue:

"that conservation and sustainable use of coastal zones is one of the fundamental aspects of such a strategy and that accordingly high priority should be given to specific action to implement this".

The conference was saying that a high priority should be given to designating areas deserving of protection—in complete contradiction to the decision announced 20 days before by the Secretary of State for Wales.

The third conclusion was:

"that this strategy should be applied to the coast as a single coherent system including the coastal waters and estuaries and the land directly or indirectly influenced by and influencing the coastal zone".

That argument, that the strategy should apply to a single coherent system, lies at the heart of the matter. All the conservation organisations that have opposed the measure have done so on the basis that we cannot set aside and sacrifice a specific district and expect that to have no impact on the greater whole.

The British Government attended that conference and were signatories to its conclusions, as were 20 or 30 of their European partners, organisations including the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission. It is difficult to conceive of a more bizarre occurrence. Last week, the Government were putting their name to a declaration that enshrined the principle of the protection of our fragile eco-systems; today—a week later—they present a Bill to the House that is at complete variance with the principles to which they put their name a week earlier.

We need a clear and consistent policy from the Government showing their approach to the protection of our fragile ecosystems if we are not to have increasing conflict between development groups and conservation pressures. I do not believe that debates such as this provide the proper way to reconcile such conflicts, which we must take out of the political arena. One week a certain pressure might be given priority and the next week another one could be given priority. We need a consistent set of policies to protect the environment and ensure that beleaguered communities such as mine in the valleys and those in Cardiff know precisely how they can develop. The Government would do us all—certainly the electors of Cardiff—a great favour if they were to remove the uncertainty about such developments and lay before the House a system for reconciling the conflicts.

If there is one lesson to be learnt from the five Bills presented on the development of the Cardiff bay barrage it is that there are contradictory pressures and almost overwhelming forces on both sides of the argument. Political debates such as this are not the proper way to resolve those conflicts.

5.26 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I fear that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) allowed his fertile imagination to run away with him and to ignore the facts. He hurled out charges that my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) and I had not had the courtesy to stay to vote in all the Divisions when we last debated the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. Since he made that charge, I have looked at the records and can assure him of my presence at each of the Divisions at 9.13 pm, 9.29 pm, 10 pm, 12.52 am and 4.11 am. The hon. Gentleman may have missed the fact that for three of those Divisions I acted as a teller.

Mr. Ron Davies: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. I have a copy of the Division list now; I made a mistake and I offer my unreserved apologies. He was recorded as a teller. I should have known better and checked the voting list. As a teller, he did not vote, and I offer him my apologies.

Mr. Jones: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and normal relations are restored. I look forward to his future career as Chief Whip of the Labour party.

I shall make my contribution fairly brief because I have a sense of deja vu, or, put more simply, here we go again. Although I do not speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), who, because of other parliamentary pressures, greatly regrets that he cannot be here, I am sure that I echo his thoughts when I say that the sense of "here we go again" is very much abroad in Cardiff.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that now is the wrong time to be debating the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It is certainly not too early to be doing so. In Cardiff I am frequently asked why the measure is not yet on the statute book after so much time has been spent on it. I say that as strongly as possible. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor did not wish to indulge in a diatribe on the politics of Cardiff because that city is, I think, foreign to him. Were he to spend more time in Cardiff, he would realise the importance that many of its citizens attach to the rapid progress of this and many other important measures.

Mr. Livsey: I said that in the context of the fact that not all the reports are out, which means that we cannot have an objective analysis of the issue. In that context, the debate is too early. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will accept that I know much about Cardiff as my grandfather lived there for 50 years.

Mr. Jones: I fear that, like many a good Liberal, the hon. Gentleman is 50 years out of date.

The people of Cardiff want the measure to progress, and the hon. Gentleman would be at variance with that sentiment were he to say otherwise. There is great frustration among the people that a handful—on looking at the voting list I found that it was at most 29—of hon. Members sought to thwart the progress of the previous Bill. That handful dwindled between 9.13 pm and 9.29 pm. The number continued to drop until by the last Division only eight Members were left in the No Lobby, trying to stop the measure progressing for the capital city of Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies: That is correct. But will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the failure of the promoters of the Bill to find 100 Members to close the debate led to the downfall of the measure?

Mr. Jones: I suggest that a moral and intellectual bankruptcy on the hon. Gentleman's side failed to produce any impressive vote against the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. Although we did not make sufficient progress that night on mere technicalities, there was a clear, even at times a large, majority in favour of the Bill. I accept that we did not have enough Members to satisfy the rules of the House. That is why the proponents of the measure were at the greater disadvantage. I do not count it as a great loss to be defeated by a mere eight.

Mr. Michael: In the spirit of amity in the Chamber tonight, does the hon. Gentleman accept that one thing on which we can all agree is that the private Bill system caused disadvantage to all, whether for or against the barrage? Does he agree that the procedure created many of the disagreements and problems that underlay the arguments which persisted throughout the process until that date?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, but we have moved on and the measure is now a Government Bill. We have the problems of the private Bill behind us and I hope that we can make progress. On behalf of my city and as representative for Cardiff, North, I inform the House that there is great regret that so much has been done which will have to be done again. We are having only our first debate on the Bill—the Second Reading debate—tonight.

The delays which have come to pass so far will pale into insignificance when eventually we can look back on the successful creation of the barrage in Cardiff and the regeneration of the area. It is no short project. It will take a long time to come to pass. The time that we have wasted and the hours that we have spent through the nights will pale into insignificance when it has all happened.

However, I would be failing in my duty if I did not tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there is continuing anxiety about a further point. It is feared that the general election will intervene to frustrate progress on the Cardiff bay barrage. The Opposition have tabled an amendment described as a reasoned amendment which refers to groundwater, consultation and water quality. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) spoke at great length about the various points in his reasoned amendment, including his reservations that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might be the arbiter in matters of water quality. He said that he would prefer an independent arbiter. Yet on the whole the hon. Gentleman's speech was lightweight. He made points which essentially were not Second Reading points but points which deserve to be properly considered in Committee. I am sure that they will be considered in Committee.

I was amazed that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who occupies the position of shadow Secretary of State for Wales, could waffle on for so long saying nothing. Even when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked whether he supported the central principle in the Bill, and whether he was in favour of the Cardiff bay barrage, he was never prepared to come off the fence and answer the question. He refused to say. He waffled and simply would not come to the point. That was not

untypical of his hon. Friends. Perhaps with more credence, they advanced their reservations about parts of the Bill. But in their turn they avoided the central principle of the Bill.

Surely the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside and other Opposition Members cannot be blind to the advantages that the Cardiff bay barrage will bring and the comparative disadvantages that would occur if the barrage was not built. Opposition Members must have researched the matter, but if they have not I remind them that in January 1990 a definitive planning update and economic appraisal statement was published by a group of development consultants. The consultants were Roger Tym and Partners, Conran Roche, Chesterton, and Peat Marwick McClintock. A major part of the study compared the likely outcome of the Cardiff Bay development corporation project with and without the barrage. The analysis of their conclusions is worth recalling.

The study said that there would be 24,850 permanent jobs with the barrage but only 12,700 jobs without it. There would be 24,000 man-years of construction jobs with the barrage but only 11,000 without it. It is calculated that the project will generate 4,774 new homes with the barrage but only 2,543 new homes without it.

Mr. Rogers: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman says. The views of the valley Members have been badly misrepresented in the debate. It has been suggested that we are selfish and that we do not want the development in Cardiff. That is untrue. I will vote to give Cardiff Bay development corporation any powers, but I do not see how the expenditure of about £400 million of public money will increase economic development in the Cardiff area. That is why I am interested in the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Perhaps he will disabuse me if I am ignorant of the advantages, but I understand that the barrage will create an area of water in which people can park boats and which people will be able to see from their houses. It will not add one square inch of land.

I am interested to know how the barrage will create more jobs. Is it expected that people will build factories in Cardiff if their workers can go out fishing at lunchtime or park their boats in the bay? I genuinely want to be converted.

Mr. Jones: I fear that the hon. Gentleman has not done any real research. He cannont have read any of the reports, such as the appraisal statement to which I have referred. How can anyone doubt that the Cardiff bay barrage and the freshwater lake that it would create would result in a total transformation and regeneration of the south Cardiff area? Without the barrage the area will be exactly as the advertisements to which the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) referred suggest. In various places we have seen the two pictures. One shows a stagnant landscape and the other shows a transformed, vibrant landscape. That transformed vibrancy would provide a real incentive to the development. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if he studies the matter he will realise that that real incentive and that transformation will encourage people to build and expand their horizons. That is where all the extra growth will come from.

I reiterate the figures. I invite the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to study the report produced by the development consultants. They estimate that there will be 7,440 million sq ft of commercial space with the barrage but only 3,991 million sq ft without it and that the project will achieve £125·55 million of capital investment with the barrage but only £54·2 million without it.

Most interestingly, private sector leverage would occur at a ratio of 7:1 with the barrage but at only 3·5:1 without it. Those effects of transforming our waterside in Cardiff will be brought about only by the barrage. Compared with a barrage-less development, the barrage will bring 49 per cent. extra permanent jobs to Cardiff bay, 47 per cent. extra houses, 54 per cent. extra construction jobs, 46 per cent. extra commercial space and 50 per cent. extra private sector leverage on investment.

Dr. Kim Howells: I am intrigued by the extraordinary exactitude of the hon. Gentleman's figures. Why does the Conservative party appear to have a sexual obsession with damming and impounding flowing water, and why does it see stagnant water as a magnet that will attract jobs?

Mr. Jones: That was a fascinating selection of adjectives, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to go into sexual fetishes I refuse to follow him.

The research has been thorough and it has been carried out by development consultants and others. What it describes will come to pass; the essential catalyst will be the construction of the barrage. Obviously, construction jobs depend on that, but there will also be a transformation of the landscape. I invite Opposition Members quietly to reflect on the pictures in the advertisements of the Cardiff bay development corporation. They show the difference between stagnation and a vibrant landscape. The figures are not mine; they have been excellently researched by the consultants.

Mr. Morgan: I find the hon. Gentleman's touching faith in the veracity of the advertising breathtaking. He reminds me of the old lady who was once discovered wandering disconsolately around a supermarket, unsure of what to buy. The supermarket manager asked her why she did not know what to buy. She replied that her telly was broken, so she had seen no advertisements. The hon. Gentleman similarly seems to think that what advertisements say must be true. As a Member of Parliament, he should involve himself in discovering whether these advertisements mean anything and whether the consultants' reports mean anything.

We have all seen consultants' reports commissioned in our time. The consultants always ask the person paying for the reports what he wants them to say. If they are paid for saying that, they will say it, as they have done on this occasion. The hon. Gentleman must use his independent judgment to put a value on the consultants' figures, which have been dreamt up out of thin air.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman brought a smile to my face then. For a moment I detected a return to the old good humour that used to typify his contributions—he approached every fresh problem with a fresh joke.

Mr. Rogers: It was not a very good one.

Mr. Jones: I agree. It is just that I was pleased to hear a note of humour that has been absent for too long returning to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West should raise his sights above his cynicism. Certainly there is a place for cynicism and we should all be critical from time to time,

[Mr. Jones]

but this project has been so well researched that the time for cynicism has passed. Now is the time for a grand vision of what can be brought about in Cardiff bay. It can only come about if the barrage is built. The case for it deserves better than the cynical examination to which it has been subjected.

As I was saying, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside refused to get off the fence. I can recall times when the hon. Gentleman voted with me in favour of the former Bill. We were almost appreciative of his support, which was offered in the true bipartisan spirit that has characterised this measure.

What has happened to the Leader of the Opposition, whose name is among those heading the amendment? I can remember him saying at the Dispatch Box that if other business had not kept him away he would have supported the Bill in the Lobbies.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Would my hon. Friend concede that the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) are following that excellent precept for leadership—"I must follow them because I am their leader"?

Mr. Jones: I cannot top that.

Where is the consistency of the Leader of the Opposition on this matter, important as it is to the capital city of Wales and to south Wales? The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside padded out his remarks with artificial indignation about the lord mayor of the capital city of Wales, councillor Jeffrey Sainsbury, having been appointed by my right hon. Friend as a director of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The hon. Gentleman tried to suggest that that was wrong. I believe that it struck the right balance. There are positions for five local councillors on the development corporation—two from Cardiff, two from South Glamorgan and one from Vale of Glamorgan council——

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman will not help his right hon. Friend by pursuing that. I was chief whip of the city Labour group when the arrangements were made, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that his suggestion is way out of order. Before the 1987 election an arrangement was made for the period following that election, so the suggestion of evenhandedness means that the decisions of the voters of Cardiff can be disregarded. That is not a sound argument, and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman will draw his right hon. Friend into deeper waters by pursuing it.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman does not anticipate me very well; that is not the point that I was trying to make, which is that the Labour party sought after elections this year to take not just two, three or four but every one of the local council seats on the Cardiff Bay development corporation. How did that constitute a balanced approach? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the right contribution by maintaining the bipartisan approach, after taking advice from the council. He appointed one Conservative and one Labour member from the Cardiff city council while accepting the three Labour nominations from the other two councils.

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman reads the speech by the Secretary of State's predecessor, he will find that he promised that five places would be set aside to be decided by the local authorities. Those local authorities contain the number of Labour members that serve on them due to the choice of the electorate. Again I suggest that this line of argument is unsound. The hon. Gentleman is not helping his right hon. Friend: he is making matters worse.

Mr. Jones: I do not accept that line of argument from the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. Friend can choose to appoint whomsoever he thinks fit. Naturally, he listens to recommendations from the local councils, as he clearly did on this occasion, but he was absolutely right not to adopt all their suggestions.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside cited the example of Cardiff city centre's redevelopment around the St. David's centre. He mentioned that as an example of partnership. The person who should be given the credit as the father of the redevelopment of the city centre and of the fine St. David's centre was the late councillor Ron Watkiss. It was his place on the development corporation that fell vacant because of his untimely death before the local elections, and the appointment of the lord mayor followed on naturally from that. The advantages accruing from the redevelopment of the city centre, as cited by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, have been maintained by upholding councillor Watkiss' guiding spirit.

Mr. Michael: In that case, will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether the occupancy of the development corporation board place will change when the occupancy of the lord mayor's seat changes?

Mr. Jones: That will depend on what happens when the incumbent's term expires—as the hon. Gentleman knows full well.

Mr. Rogers: Should not the more important issue of the large salaries being paid to these local authority members be looked at? Does not the hon. Gentleman think it wrong in principle that elected councillors should be paid such salaries on these corporation bodies? These duties are merely an extension of their usual council duties. It is fair enough for the councillors to claim the normal allowances, but the hon. Gentleman's proposition would give them a biased view of what is in the interests of their citizens. If they are receiving thousands of pounds as members of Cardiff Bay development corporation, they are unlikely to look dispassionately at the interests of their wards. In all fairness, they would be under a great deal of pressure.

Mr. Jones: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's fear. I am confident that councillors such as John Philips, Lord Brookes and Paddy Kitson will do their duty as members of the corporation and as local councillors. I do not know the name of the other Labour nomination for the Vale of Glamorgan council, but I know of Jeff Sainsbury. The small salaries that they would be paid as directors of the corporation will not sway them. The work is not merely an extension of the work that they already do. They will be expected to put a great deal of time into their offices and deserve to be compensated.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside spoke about co-operation. Co-operation is not always evident in Cardiff. South Glamorgan council is seeking to usurp the planning authority that is normally the preserve of Cardiff city council. An example is the medicentre at the University Hospital of Wales. The Labour-controlled South Glamorgan council is trying to set up a commercial

development on a national health centre site and wants to be judge and jury in its own court. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is not in his place. If he were, I would ask him to try to persuade South Glamorgan council away from the fait accompli that is threatened. Developments such as the medicentre should be situated in Cardiff bay. That would be better than further intensifying the use of the University Hospital of Wales site, with all the consequences for my constituents who live nearby.

I had an exchange with the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) about the old BBC offices. He was right to remind us about the granting of planning permission. I apologise to no one for doing all that I can to frustrate office development on that site. The most obvious place for that development is Cardiff bay. However, I am happy for claims to be advanced by Merthyr, Pontypridd or Rhondda, or by anyone else. I shall continue to oppose over-intensive use of the site because that has grave traffic implications. Conservative councillors and I managed to persuade Labour-dominated Cardiff city council to turn down the scheme. The issue went to appeal and the Welsh Office found that as the site was already in office use it should remain in such use. I am sorry that the Secretary of State could not have reached a different conclusion.

South Glamorgan council offered to facilitate the development by providing a new junction at Caerphilly road and Manor way where there was potential for grid-locking traffic in north Cardiff into the constituency of Pontypridd and possibly Caerphilly. I agreed with the hon. Member for Cardiff, West when he suggested that future expansion of University College, Cardiff was unlikely to be able to proceed in the north of the city. That is right, and I rushed to agree with the hon. Gentleman. I should like to see a statutory green belt policy applied in the north of Cardiff, possibly using the line of the M4. Other areas south of the M4 should also be protected by a statutory green belt. South Glamorgan council persists in trying to develop green fields and should be stopped by a green belt policy.

It has been suggested that the Opposition amendment is merely a cosmetic exercise to cover the cracks in the Opposition. It is felt that Labour's approach to the Bill and to other matters will prove embarrassing at the election and could cost Labour votes in the marginals in south Wales. Where does Labour stand on this issue? Perhaps in his winding-up speech the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) will tell us.

It was thought that there was a bipartisan approach because the previous Bill was promoted not only by the development corporation but by Labour-controlled South Glamorgan council. It is perhaps germane to recall the words of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who said, "If we can change our policies to win, we can change them back just as quickly afterwards." The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside previously supported the Bill, and the Leader of the Opposition has said that he would have supported it if he could have been here.

It will be interesting to see how Opposition Members vote on Second Reading. There is already a tendency in south Wales for the Opposition to be identified as Luddites. The leftward shift of Cardiff city council means that it is now moving to oppose the Bill, and I understand that the council will petition against it. It brought out a long-winded summons which concludes that the council will oppose the Bill. However, it is a summons for a meeting of the council at 8 am. What opposition is the council trying to avoid by calling a meeting at that time? Suggestions of cosmetic exercises and Luddites could be very much to our political advantage. We could have another London factor leading to votes for Conservatives in south Wales.

I hope that we can put all that behind us. The Bill presents a tremendous opportunity for regeneration and transformation of the capital city of Wales. It will lead to many jobs and new homes and environmental improvements. Not least, it will improve the flood defences of our city. Cardiff grew dramatically in the last century because of coal, the railways and the port. That has been reversed since the 1920s because coal has not been exported in such quantity and the tendency has been for coal to be imported through the port of Cardiff. The Bill is an opportunity for a 21st century rebirth of our capital city through 25,000 new permanent jobs and new housing. A quarter of that housing will be social housing, which is necessary for that part of our capital city and for south Wales generally. The jobs will benefit not only Cardiff because their impact will be felt over a much wider area.

It has been overwhelmingly proved that the Bill will be of tremendous advantage to Cardiff. We must grasp the opportunity. All the problems are envisaged or are being tackled. Now is the time for vision, not cynicism. Let us put behind us all the time-wasting of the past.

5.59 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I was looking forward to saying what a good-tempered debate we were having, but then the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) was mischievous at the end of his speech. I am sure that, deep down under that mischievous surface, he appreciates that to support a reasoned amendment is to make a reasoned argument. He knows the enthusiasm with which I have supported the barrage project since its earliest days. He will not succeed in dividing the Labour party. He did not help his case by accusing Labour Members of being Luddites when all of us know the tremendous work that has been done by Labour members of local authorities to encourage inward investment and the redevelopment of south Wales. That is true not only of Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council but of other Labour-controlled county councils in south Wales.

When I spoke at the end of the debate on the private Bill, in response to the comments of a number of my hon. Friends, I pledged my support for the needs of the valleys. I appealed to my hon. Friends not to deny Cardiff the development associated with the barrage and said that in return I would support, with every possible effort, the redevelopment of the valleys. Despite the efforts to bring jobs into Cardiff, unemployment is very high there. Cardiff, Central is the constituency with the highest unemployment in Wales while Cardiff, South and Penarth and Cardiff, West are among the 10 constituencies with the most unemployment. There is a considerable unemployment problem to be overcome, and the regeneration of Cardiff is as essential as the regeneration of the valley communities represented by my hon. Friends.

Our amendment states three important principles. The first is that nothing should be done to weaken the protections available to any who might—I stress "might"—be adversely affected by groundwater. Secondly, it says

[Mr. Alun Michael]

that the results of the public consultation on the Secretary of State's expert advice should be available to the House at this stage, but that the exercise is not yet finished. Thirdly, it says that there should be independent scrutiny involved in the event of any disagreement between the National Rivers Authority and the Cardiff Bay development corporation over water quality. Other issues have been touched on in the debate, but are not part of the reasoned amendment and I want to ensure that the House is not misled and that the voice of my constituents does not go unheard on these points.

I welcome the Secretary of State's reference to additional finance. We have been worried by the impact of the recession at a time when there is a danger that the development might be distorted because of the need to keep moving and to retain confidence.

Three issues have not yet been fully dealt with. The first is housing. The development corporation has given an undertaking that 25 per cent. of the housing constructed will be social housing for rent. That percentage does not include student housing, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), or sheltered housing for the elderly for sale. That undertaking is important because it gives the existing community an undertaking that its children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to stay in south Cardiff. In view of the housing crisis in Cardiff, that contribution is not insignificant, although many of us would like the proportion to be even higher.

The second issue is training. People living in the area, especially young people, should be given the opportunity to have the training necessary to give them the chance to get the jobs that will result from the redevelopment. An important start has been made through work between the development corporation and the private sector employers; it is a fragile start, but it should be encouraged and placed at the forefront of people's minds as the development proceeds.

The third issue is relocation of existing businesses. That has been particularly difficult, because many businesses in older areas where the rental levels and the value of the land are low are having problems because of the impact of the recession. I hope that the Secretary of State will take to his Cabinet colleagues the experience of Cardiff and suggest that there be a change in compensation legislation. In France, for example, compensation for a public development is value plus 20 per cent., which allows an element of flexibility to encourage movement when that is in the greater public interest.

The civil servants in the Welsh Office, the people working in the Cardiff Bay development corporation, and those in local authorities who have helped firms to relocate without the loss of jobs have been in difficulties because of the system that we have. A change is necessary, and I hope that we learn from this. Because of existing legislation, the Secretary of State cannot be more flexible, but I hope that he will continue to be as positive as he can and will encourage his civil servants to be as positive as they can on all these issues.

Hon. Members have spoken about representation on the development corporation. The Labour party has always said that there is no need for a development corporation. We redeveloped the centre of Cardiff on a cross-party basis and in co-operation with the private sector. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North was, like me, a member of the council during that important time. It is sad that the undertaking given by a previous Secretary of State, Lord Crickhowell—to provide five places to be decided by the local authorities—should be cast in doubt. I had not intended to touch on this matter today, but I must correct the hon. Member for Cardiff, North. It may have been a mistake by the then Secretary of State, but he gave a promise and I hope that, when the opportunity arises, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North will recognise the benefit that the councillor who was not accepted, councillor Geoff Mungham, would have brought to the operation of the development corporation. I am sure that it was not a personal decision, but it was a mistake.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) referred to the advertising budget. The main criticism of the Cardiff Bay development corporation is that it has not made its case locally as sensitively as it might have done, and has left it up to me, the county councils and others to do so. It is that rather than the spending of money in the area that is open to criticism.

My hon. Friend made a number of telling points. I understand his point about the location of the Welsh health common services authority. I would hardly not welcome jobs coming to my constituency, but I recognise the validity of his case. I remind him that I have given an undertaking that I will work hard in co-operation with him and other colleagues to regenerate the economy of the whole area.

Dr. Kim Howells: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's latter remarks, and I hope that the common services authority will flourish in the bay and will bring more employment to the area. However, my observations were directed at the way in which the decision was arrived at by, among other people, the Welsh Office.

Mr. Michael: I accept the validity of my hon. Friend's point, which he made well.

My hon. Friend also referred to Techniquest. I had the pleasure the other week of visiting the science centre in Toronto and seeing examples of equipment from Techniquest. I saw its logo used in that centre. The Secretary of State has taken an interest in this. It is now moving into such sectors as chemistry, in which it is difficult to arouse public interest. I hope that it will be encouraged to develop naturally, in the way and the character that it assumed when it was developing under the innovative approach of Professor Beetlestone and his colleagues.

I am sure that we want the project to be ambitious and a world leader and that everyone would unite in that aspiration. The problem is that we need the cash to develop the project, and that is where the relevance of the barrage comes into the equation in terms of development in south Cardiff.

I agree also with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Pontypridd on the importance of the centre for the performing arts. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who has a love of opera, might agree with that, as long as the benefit of Welsh National Opera is retained and developed in south Wales and is of benefit to all parts of Wales and not only of the capital. It is important, of course, that other performing arts are involved.

When we consider the leverage figures on the options, with or without the barrage, there can be no doubt of the importance of the barrage, even if that is discounted by a percentage. Let us say that the leverage of private sector investment is 3·5:1 without the barrage and 7:1 with it. There would be 12,700 net jobs without the barrage and 24,850 with it. There would be a net value of minus £166 million without the barrage and a positive net value of £301 million with it. These figures are telling. With the barrage, there is an opportunity to secure the major investment, the major draw of jobs to the area and the major positive changes in the environment, in housing and in benefit to my constituents that we want to see. I recognise now that my hon. Friends who represent valley constituencies do not wish to obstruct those opportunities, although there have been occasions in the past when I have had momentary doubts about that. However, those times have past.

As the percentage of the development has been discussed, it is surely right to refer to the courage that has been shown by those who have supported it from the beginning. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North mentioned councillor Ron Watkiss. I have spoken on previous occasions about the involvement of councillor John Reynolds, to whom I pay tribute. It is sad that neither of those cross-party colleagues is present to see their efforts come to fruition.

I pay tribute also to the courage of South Glamorgan county council in creating a flagship at the heart of the development in south Wales. It is interesting that the county council can claim to have saved nearly £2·5 million already as a result of the development in south Cardiff. As it disposed of the former county headquarters to an inward investor, about 500 jobs have come to the city. Basically, and more importantly, the county council showed leadership and confidence in going forward into the development. As a result, others—especially in the private sector—shared the authority's confidence and went in behind it.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) made a lightweight contribution to the debate. I asked him to substantiate his outrageous and unsupported suggestion that houses would be in danger of being flooded, and he failed to do so. I asked him to tell us whether he was speaking for his party, and he failed to do so. A common misapprehension of those who have not gone into these matters seriously is that the construction of a physical barrage across Cardiff bay will prevent flow out of the rivers. The barrage will, of course, be fitted with sluices to pass river flow when tide levels permit. It is not always realised that flow out of the rivers does not occur at high tides in present circumstances due to the presence of the mass of tidal water in the Bristol channel.

It is clear, therefore—this was not in dispute when these issues were considered by the Select Committee—that the main beneficial effect of the barrage will be in excluding the high tide levels in the bay and the rivers. The barrage has a generally neutral effect on levels due to high river discharges. There is, however, a considerable question mark over the flood levels and what will be needed to deal with them in the event of global warming and the continuing rise of sea levels. In such circumstances we might thank our lucky stars for the existence of the barrage, which would provide protection. Alternative investment would have to be massive to protect Cardiff from the danger of flooding.

During the Select Committee's deliberations the danger of groundwater was at issue, not flooding. When I questioned the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor about that, he told the House that 65 in of rain falls in the Brecon Beacons. That was less than helpful. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not researched the danger of groundwater before coming to the Chamber to pontificate about it. It is clear also that he does not understand flooding issues generally.

I have been concerned from the beginning whether the building of the barrage will give my constituents a better chance of a job, will increase their chance of a decent home, will improve their environment and will offer training opportunities. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the drawbacks. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and I have always considered groundwater to be of crucial importance. I am not sure whether it is wise to use expressions such as "urban squalor" when they are not justified by scientific evidence. I recognise that that was a quote from one of the individuals on whom the campaigners against the barrage have placed great store. It is important to scrutinise all the evidence, and equally it is important not to worry people living in areas of Cardiff where there is no threat of a rise in groundwater. For that reason, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd was wise not to enter into the groundwater argument.

That is why I sought the independent advice of Glyn Jones—now Professor Glyn Jones—and provided him with a brief, which was to be as searching and critical as possible in his study, the results of which would be made public, irrespective of whether they damaged the case for the barrage. The brief was provided also on the condition that the Cardiff Bay development corporation, and Hydrotechnica subsequently, would make available all reports and raw data required by him in preparing his advice to me.

In his original report, Professor Glyn Jones stated that the consultants had built in a generous safety factor that had improved confidence in the calculations used for predictive purposes. He added that people living in the affected area could be considerably more assured than had previously been possible about the likely effect of the proposed barrage on groundwater conditions. Since then we have had the Hydrotechnica report, on which opponents placed such considerable emphasis.

There are a couple of factors that Professor Glyn Jones as an independent adviser has drawn to my attention. They should be considered in addition to the reassurance that has already come from Hydrotechnica, as well as from Professor Lloyd, who scrutinised the report for Cardiff city council. This will be prior to the detailed scrutiny that the Secretary of State's adviser will be undertaking. It will be important for us to read his findings and I regret that they are not before us for the debate.

Professor Glyn Jones says, first, that the terms of reference were agreed between the expert technical advisers to the corporation and the petitioners. Secondly, he observes that Hydrotechnica was free to include such work as it considered necessary over as large an area as it deemed appropriate. In short, the terms of reference were to be interpreted as guidelines and not as a straitjacket.

[Mr. Michael]

In the time available, I cannot go into the detail of Professor Glyn Jones's comments. I am merely saying that it is reassuring to those of us who have been looking forward to the Hydrotechnica results to give us a sound foundation on which to pass judgment on the groundwater issue. He tells me that the report showed the geological succession identified from previous investigations was confirmed as being fundamentally correct. He considers that the greatest advance has been made in the additional work on made ground. It is significant that about one third of the boreholes drilled into the made ground were dry and that the others showed only a thin saturated zone. All the evidence points to rapid vertical recharge and equally rapid horizontal drainage.

It was Professor Glyn Jones's conclusions that Hydrotechnica had fulfilled the requirements of the agreed terms of reference without conceding any independence of action, that it had confirmed the general understanding of the hydrogeology of the area that was presented in previous works and added considerably to knowledge of the response of the made ground to natural and artificial inputs, that it had identified and quantified all but a few of the separate elements that make up the complex integrated system and demonstrated a functional water balance of flow through this system in support of its conceptual version of the model. The professor said:

"One can be satisfied that in their numerical model the consultants have incorporated as much relevant information as is practicable, and that this model provides as reasonable a simulation of the prevailing conditions as is likely to be obtained."

He concluded:

"In their most probable version, the predicted rises in the critical areas of less than 0·1 metre should cause no concern, and are less than those predicted in the WEP report. Inclusion of the extreme cases as a safety factor results in no significant difference, except for a few identifiable localities where land drainage works would be advisable to allay any concern among residents."

That is an extremely important reassurance, and when we have the observations of the Secretary of State's adviser, it should help to allay the considerable fears that were aroused during the debates on the Bill.

As to environmental matters and sites of special scientific interest, I believe that a mistake was made in characterising the Leybucht bay case as being relevant to Cardiff bay, because it dealt with construction works in a special protection area already designated under the EEC birds directive, which establishes a strict regime of development and control within such areas.

In the case of other areas, such as Cardiff bay and the Severn estuary—which together may be being considered for designation as special protection areas—the Leybucht judgment made it clear that member states have a discretion to take various factors into account, including economic considerations of benefit to local people. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) emphasised, the Leybucht finding was important, but it is not relevant to the Cardiff bay argument.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly for his support today and for recognising that arguments must be balanced. I acknowledge his great concern about the impact of development on estuaries and on wildlife generally. It is a question of disagreeing over the analysis of the impact of developing the bay area. In my view, from all the evidence I have seen, the Secretary of State was right not to include Cardiff bay in the Severn estuary for European designation.

The precedent argument, made by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in particular, does not in itself make a strong case, for there was no real interest in protection prior to the barrage development. Secondly, as to the SSSI defence, I studied the paperwork that was involved at the time of the SSSI designation, and discovered that there was no consultation with local authorities. There was simply an instant decision. There was no process of debate of the kind that my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly rightly said there ought to be when such matters are being discussed.

It is sad that the Cardiff bay development has become a political football between warring factions. I am at one with my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly in his assertion that there is a need to take such issues out of the party political scene, and out of the scene as between those who want to see development and those who value environmental protection.

The Opposition's amendment asks the House to acknowledge that the existing Secretary of State for Wales, or any future Secretary of State, should not have the power to weaken the protection afforded to anyone who might —and I emphasise "might"—be affected detrimentally by any rise in groundwater. That reassurance should not be taken away from people.

We also regret that we do not know the outcome of the consultation or the conclusions of the Secretary of State's adviser and his comments on the work undertaken by Hydrotechnica. Reference has been made to the lack of public debate. Perhaps that is due to fears of a Select Committee among those who would have to give evidence. One of the Clerks told me that lawyers tend to regard the members of Select Committees as remote gods to be propitiated rather than as right hon. and hon. Members requiring to be persuaded. Perhaps it is that which has made Hydrotechnica and others reluctant to provide answers that would be helpful to the public.

As for water quality, it is important that there should be independent verification of water standards. The National Rivers Authority is unsatisfactory, and the Cardiff Bay development corporation is unaccountable and is the creature of the Secretary of State. There should be independent verification of water quality to guide the Secretary of State, or to adjudicate. The Secretary of State said that those four issues could be addressed. Let him tell the House that they will be addressed by the House, because they are all important in enabling us to unite in supporting this important development for south Cardiff.

6.24 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): This afternoon's short debate has highlighted a number of issues regarding the development of Cardiff, and in particular the Bill's major defects. As was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), the Bill has been both hastily and badly drafted. It is also ill-thought-out, and as a consequence it is deeply flawed.

Despite the fact that there have been four private or public Bills relating to the Cardiff bay barrage area, the enormous controversy that the issue has aroused in Cardiff, the House, and the whole of Wales, and that, quite properly, feelings have run high on both sides of the

argument, the Bill is so sloppy and so obviously the work of the dead hand of the Treasury that it is a legislative clanger.

The Bill provides insufficient and inadequate safeguards against groundwater flooding; fails to ensure proper water quality; allows the Secretary of State—despite his earlier remarks—to overrule proper and necessasry protection against the risk of flooding; and gives only the most cursory attention to public consultation with those Cardiff residents who will be most affected. Given everything that has occurred over the past few months and years, the Bill is so inept and clumsy that I wonder about the judgment and common sense of all those who have been involved in the bay project or in the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

My hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly, for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) commented that the role played by the corporation in the past few months has been less than exemplary. Perhaps that is inevitable, because the corporation is accountable to no one. If it had been, the latest and most disastrous attempt at public consultation would not have put the whole project in some jeopardy, as it has done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) referred to the development corporation's poor attempt—backed as it is by the Welsh Office—to secure some degree of public consultation on groundwater flooding and other matters over the past few months. My hon. Friend said that the corporation has a public relations budget of millions of pounds, but there is no doubt in my mind that it has fluffed it.

Even the local Conservative party made a better attempt at trying to persuade the people of Cardiff to become involved in some form of consultation in respect of the bay development. I have a copy of a leaflet that the Conservative party in the constituency of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) published. It states:

"Your Conservative MP Ian Grist wants to know your views on the proposed Cardiff Bay Barrage. If you want to comment please fill out the questionnaire on the back page."

I am bound to say that that questionnaire is a little inept and certainly very partial. The reader is asked to tick one or more of the boxes shown against four statements. The first is,

"I am in favour of the barrage."

The second is,

"I am against the barrage."

The third is, "I don't know"; and the fourth is,

"I am interested in joining the Conservative Party. Please send me further details."

At least that represents some sort of attempt to persuade the people of Cardiff to express their views on the groundwater problems.

As many of my hon. Friends have rightly pointed out, the development of south Cardiff should have been placed in the hands of South Glamorgan and Cardiff city councils. St. David's hall is one of the finest concert halls not only in the United Kingdom, but in Europe. It was built because the city council—it does not matter whether it was Conservative or Labour—was responsible for the creation of the town centre and the St. David's centre. Similarly, county hall and Atlantic wharf were created by South Glamorgan county council.

Those two councils have provided excellent examples of the way in which local authorities, working together, and working with the public and private sectors and the Welsh Office, were able to develop Cardiff as the Cardiff Bay development corporation will never be able to do. With all its money, its experts, its public relations budget and its colonels and generals, the corporation has failed to reassure residents about flooding, or to gain the confidence of the people of Cardiff.

Judging by what I have heard today, so many senior officers—colonels, brigadiers and generals—are now running various bodies in Wales that I suspect that, despite the best efforts of the Secretary of State for Defence, we shall have an extra regiment there. We could, perhaps, call it the Royal Quango Regiment of Wales; that would accord with the impression gained by many who are involved in public affairs in the Principality.

None of it comes as a surprise to me. For many years Cwmbran, which I represent, was run by a development corporation. Towards the end of its life, the corporation became increasingly out of touch with the people of the area. I do not want to wish that experience on the people of Cardiff. Labour has pledged to phase out the Cardiff Bay development corporation, and to return its functions and resources to our two local authorities in South Glamorgan. That does not mean that the south of Cardiff should not be developed; it means that the work will be carried out with much more sensitivity and accountability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) rightly mentioned the industry that is being introduced to the area. We must not forget, however, that unemployment is worse in the Welsh capital than it is in many of the south Wales valleys—worse, certainly, than it is in my constituency. Butetown has a 22 per cent. unemployment rate. In Adamstown, 700 are out of work; in Grangetown, 650; in Splott, 600; and, in Rumney, over 1,200. In the whole of Cardiff, at least 15,000 are jobless—and that does not take into account the 30 fiddles that the Government have introduced into the unemployment figures over the past few years.

South Cardiff needs manufacturing jobs—well-paid, full-time jobs. It needs companies that are not afraid of trade unions. We need more than pretty, cosmetic jobs that fit the Cardiff bay image.

Housing should be another key priority. Thousands of people are lingering on Cardiff's housing waiting lists; there are hundreds of homeless in our capital. We need much more rented and low-cost housing in the Cardiff bay area than the Bill would allow. The 25 per cent. proportion about which the Secretary of State has boasted was included only because the corporation's Labour representatives were anxious to ensure a proper allocation of resources. The last thing that that part of Cardiff needs is more of the expensive yuppie houses that have been built in the London docklands, at the expense of many residents. However, the housing allocation conferred by the Bill simply is not good enough.

Notwithstanding what I have said, the essence of our reasoned amendment does not concern housing or manufacturing jobs, important though both those aspects are. It concerns the environment. A good deal of criticism has been thrown at our councils, but they would never have been responsible for the miscalculation and mismanagement that we observe not only in this fourth Bill, but in the actions of the development corporation.

We must provide the strongest possible safeguards against the historic problems of flooding in parts of Cardiff. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly has

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

pointed out, we must adopt a sensitive and sympathetic attitude to the birds and other wildlife in the bay; we must also pay close attention to water quality in the bay and the rivers that flow into it, not only now but later. All those principles underlie our reasoned—and reasonable—amendment.

Ultimately, of course, Cardiff will become a capital city that is both prosperous and the cultural, administrative and political centre of Wales—a city that is no longer divided between north and south—only if our economy is strong, our people are decently housed, our education and training policies are as good as any in Europe and our concern for the environment is genuine. I believe, along with my right hon. and hon. Friends, that the people of Cardiff, and those of Wales as a whole, realise that all that will be possible only with the return of a Labour Government. I urge the House to vote for the amendment.

6.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): Let me begin by wishing the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) a very happy 43rd birthday. I can think of better ways of spending a birthday than defending the impossible, as the hon. Gentleman has just done from the Dispatch Box.

This has been an interesting debate. Interesting speeches have been made not only by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), but by the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones).

I am sure that we were all surprised when the hon. Member for Torfaen said that only a "cursory look" had been given to the Bill. Some of us had to sit here for thirteen and a half hours on 16 April to debate just two amendments to the private Bill; the House of Lords debated Second Reading of a previous Bill for two hours, and Third Reading for 50 minutes. A House of Lords Select Committee sat for 14 days, and a House of Commons Select Committee for 27. Since November 1989, a total of 25·5 hours has been spent in the House of Commons on this Bill and the private Bills that preceded it. I do not think that anyone else would describe that as cursory.

Mr. Murphy: I thank the Minister for his good wishes. His statistics are impressive, but, when I used the word "cursory", I was referring specifically to the lack of public consultation about groundwater flooding, rather than the number of hours devoted to the four Bills that we have been considering.

Mr. Bennett: A three-month consultation on the Hydrotechnica report is now taking place, and will conclude at the end of the year. There will be ample opportunity for the people of Cardiff to examine the entire consultation document—or summaries of it—and to take part in the consultation. We shall welcome their views, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage them to write to us. It is important that we hear all kinds of views.

The barrage scheme is one of the largest civil engineering projects in Europe. Only the channel tunnel project is larger. It would produce a freshwater lake of some 500 acres and more than eight miles of waterfront. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, it would produce between 25,000 and 30,000 new jobs in the area and regenerate a large part of one of our greatest capital cities. On those grounds alone, we are right to support the Bill.

I intend to deal briefly, in the short time available to me, with some of the points that were made during the debate by Opposition Members. I shall ensure that the major points raised by hon. Members that I am unable to answer now are dealt with in correspondence. Copies will be placed in the Library.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside referred to clause 21(2). He said that the Secretary of State will be able to weaken its provisions. We have no intention of weakening the powers provided for in clause 21 concerning groundwater protection. We intend to ensure that the protection that has been given by way of assurance will be given. The important point is that the House will have the opportunity, by means of affirmative resolution, to consider the regulations that are made.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I see that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside wants to intervene. I shall give way to him, though he was not prepared to give way to me during his speech.

Mr. Jones: Why should we believe the Under-Secretary of State and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales? They both said that they believed in the virtues of the poll tax. Now they denounce it.

Mr. Bennett: I do not intend to enter into a debate about that. However, the hon. Gentleman opposed the rates in July 1974 when he stood at this Dispatch Box. Now he wants to return to the rates. That is not a very productive road down which to travel. We have said at the Dispatch Box that there will be no weakening of the assurances given on groundwater.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I have only 19 minutes left in which to deal with detailed points and have already given way twice, but I shall give way again, first to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and then to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. They will be the last interventions that I shall allow.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister not accept that he cannot bind his successors? It may be his intention, as well as the intention of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, not to exercise the power to weaken the groundwater protection, but it would be possible for their successors so to do, during the brief period between now and the general election, were there to be another Secretary of State for Wales. Does he agree that people need to be reassured? That was the point raised both by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and by me. We have sought the best possible reassurance for inclusion in the Bill.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that any Conservative Secretary of State for Wales will honour

the pledge that I have given. In the unlikely event of a Labour Government coming to office, I suggest that he should put pressure on whoever fills the position of Secretary of State for Wales. Both this and the next Conservative Government will guarantee the pledges that are given from this Dispatch Box. The important point about not including such a provision in the Bill is that circumstances may change. We may need to strengthen the groundwater protection, due to circumstances that cannot now be anticipated.

Mr. Morgan: I hope that the Under-Secretary of State understands why we are pressing him on this point. As soon as I read the clause I went to the Clerk's Department and asked whether it would be possible for the Secretary of State to bind himself in such a way that any amendment he might make to the subsection would lead to an increase in, not to a weakening of, the groundwater protection. I was told that it would be perfectly possible for him to do that. I have come to the conclusion that, for some strange reason, that has not been done. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to the Treasury's "fingerprints"—to the fact that it had decided to reserve to itself the power either to strengthen or to weaken that provision. The Secretary of State could have bound himself to increase the groundwater protection, but he did not. As this is the fourth Bill that the House is considering, why on earth cannot the Government get the groundwater protection clause right?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman should know that it is impossible to guarantee that any scheme will be 100 per cent. right. It is absolutely right that we should have the power to strengthen, if necessary, the groundwater protection. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to follow the point. I repeat the assurance that I gave a few minutes ago—the Secretary of State for Wales and the Government have no intention of weakening that protection. The only reason for its exclusion from the Bill is that there may be a case in future for strengthening it. We cannot bind any future Administration. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not accept that assurance.

It has also been argued that it is inappropriate to consider the Bill before a decision on groundwater has been reached. The parliamentary timetable will allow the Secretary of State's decision to be announced well before Royal Assent. The Select Committee that considered the private Bill requested this consultation and was content that the additional groundwater work and the proceedings on the private Bill should proceed in parallel. To wait until the consultation was over would have meant that a new Bill could not be introduced until next November. We have already had far too much delay over this important legislation for Cardiff.

The hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside and for Cardiff, West asked whether the Stoner report would be available to the Select Committee. That depends on the response to the consultation. It would be wrong to fix a date for my right hon. Friend's decision. He will make it only when he is satisfied that he has all the information and advice that he needs.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside also asked whether cash limits would be imposed on compensation. I am happy to reassure the House that there is no possibility of cash limits being imposed on the groundwater protection scheme compensation.

The hon. Gentleman asked about water quality, which is dealt with in clause 12. The Secretary of State can overrule the National Rivers Authority only when he considers its decision to be unreasonable. That is all that the Bill allows. He may not overrule the National Rivers Authority just because he would prefer a different decision. The conditions are clearly set out in clause 12. The courts would not allow my right hon. Friend to overrule a decision unless he was able to show that the National Rivers Authority had acted unreasonably.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said that the Bill disregarded local authorities' powers in respect of impounded water. That is not true. The Bill removes none of the local authorities' powers—for example, their powers as environmental health authorities. The corporation has undertaken to provide to the city council any information that it needs.

In what, for him, was an unusually short speech after our experience in April, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West asked a number of questions. I shall not have time to answer all of them now. He said that there were seven. My right hon. Friend counted 21. I shall, however, deal with just two. The hon. Gentleman asked us whether we had taken fully into account the Leybucht judgment in coming to our decision on the Bill. We did. We referred to it specifically in the special protection area decision letter, written to Mr. Griffiths, which has been placed in the Library. We were aware that it could be open to judicial review. My right hon. Friend would not have made his decision if he had not believed it to be the correct one.

As for the 12-month readings of the boreholes—another question put to me by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West—we have made it clear that Hydrotechnica concluded that it had sufficient data to reach its conclusion. Hydrotechnica's report is out for consultation. Both we and Mr. Stoner will consider the responses and reach a view on whether that is so. We shall continue to monitor the boreholes.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly asked a number of interesting questions. He started with a question that has been asked on a number of occasions by valley Members: whether, in some way, the work that is being done in Cardiff bay will be at the expense of the valleys. It is nonsense to say that. May I remind the House of what is being done in the south Wales valleys. Resources are not being diverted. During the five years of the valleys initiative programme we expect to spend about £800 million. The achievements of the programme and future plans include 650 hectares of derelict land being cleared by the Welsh Development Agency, with 525 hectares planned to be reclaimed up to 1992. Nearly 7,000 homes have been improved under enveloping and block repair schemes. A whole range of new and exciting projects has been undertaken throughout the south Wales valleys during the past few years. Only last Friday both I and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) were at Ysbyty George Thomas for the opening of that hospital by Lord Tonypandy, half of the money for which came from my right hon. Friend's valleys initiative. One can say without fear of contradiction that, far from Cardiff grabbing money that should have gone to the valleys, the valleys have been getting a fair share of the initiative that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) introduced in 1987.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister give way? He has mentioned me.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman asks me to give way because I mentioned his name. The mention of his name was a compliment, not a criticism. I cannot believe that his attending the opening of a hospital with me last Friday is a matter of controversy, unless he wishes to deny that he shared my company. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have only 10 minutes left.

Mr. Rogers: I shall not criticise the Minister.

Mr. Bennett: Then I cannot resist giving way.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister carried out his duties last Friday in an exemplary fashion. That is rather strange but true. As I have said many times, hon. Members who represent valley constituencies feel no resentment about the development in Cardiff. The area desperately needs development. My objection as the Member of Parliament for Rhondda is that I do not see the value of spending hundreds of millions of pounds on creating a lake that does not add one square inch of land for industrial development. If I could be convinced otherwise, I would support the Bill. I support everything in the Bill except the construction of a barrage.

Mr. Bennett: That is interesting. The hon. Gentleman is perhaps the most honest Opposition Member. He said that he opposes the central purpose of the Bill—he does not want the barrage. In a minute, he will support a Labour amendment that tries to pretend that Labour is in favour of the Bill and is concerned only about minor points. He has been honest and I am sorry that he is being misguided. He has posited much of his opposition on the argument that more money should go to the valleys and that the Bill is detrimental to the valleys.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly mentioned the private Bill and the Government Bill. The fact that we are considering a Government Bill in this Session is an example of the enormous clout that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has in Cabinet. Far from him not having influence, we have the Bill because he and the Lord President determined that the people of Cardiff should have it.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bennett: No. The hon. Gentleman has only just come into the debate. He should have been here since 3.30 pm.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly mentioned birds. We carefully considered the Leybucht judgment, which made it clear that member states enjoy a margin of discretion in selecting the most suitable territories to be classified as special protection areas. It made it clear that after classification the only development that is permitted is development that relates to the public interest greater than the ecological interest covered by the directive—for example, the protection of human life from flooding.

Cardiff bay is located near the heart of the city in an area surrounded by poor environment and dereliction. We believe that there is a clear and urgent public interest in the much-needed regeneration of the area. In those circumstances, it would not have been right to place an SPA on the Cardiff bay area. Under the Leybucht judgment, we have the right to ensure that such an SPA is not imposed.

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I said that I would not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. I gave way to the hon. Member for Rhondda in a moment of weakness. I have given way about six times in the past 10 minutes.

In April, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West said a lot about birds. I have discovered that he has not been wholly consistent. In the autumn 1988 edition of *Rural Wales*, which is published for the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, he noted:

"Of course there would be severe management problems in handling the environmental consequences"—

this is on the question of Hinkley point power station and in favour of the Severn bridge—

"of migratory birds and fish and filtering out the sewage but perhaps a small risk to take."

The hon. Gentleman is prepared to put the environment second where he sees a benefit to the public, but on Cardiff bay we have been witnessing a complete turn around——

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bennett: No. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has already made a speech. I cannot give way to him every time I mention him. If the hon. Gentleman is challenging what I have read, he can tell me afterwards.

Mr. Morgan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When a speaker wrongly accuses a Member of hypocritically representing himself as being in favour of the environment and then quotes a document that he does not understand because it refers to a barrage where the tide still goes in and out half as far as before, is not he seriously misleading and misusing the procedures of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman has made his point but he is incorrect. He argues against the Cardiff bay barrage on the ground of putting the environment and birds before the public interest, as we perceive it, of the regeneration of Cardiff bay, yet on the Severn barrage he was prepared to put other interests before those of migratory birds. We are entitled to reach certain judgments from that.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to Labour's amendment as a fictitious fig-leaf. I refer to the so-called reasoned amendment as the Sellotape amendment because it is transparent—one can see straight through it to the divisions within the Labour party on this issue. It has tabled a reasoned amendment—so-called—that is not a reasoned amendment but a series of debating points for Committee. It has not opposed the principle of the Bill.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just heard the Minister challenge, I presume, Mr. Speaker, because he said that the amendment was not a reasoned amendment and therefore should not appear on the Order Paper. It has been accepted. He should withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Bennett: It certainly is not a reasonable amendment. Labour has tabled nit-picking amendments

but it does not have the courage to tell us that the real reason for doing so is to cover Labour's divisions. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) asked the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside whether he favoured the principle of the Cardiff bay barrage—yes or no. The hon. Gentleman did not answer. I attempted to intervene, but the hon. Gentleman would not give way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked whether the hon. Gentleman was in favour of the barrage, but he would not answer. Despite the 19-minute speech by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, we were not able to discover the Labour party's position on the barrage. The simple fact is that the Labour party is divided on the issue.

Several Labour Members have continually voted against the Bill. We know the real reason why the so-called reasoned amendment has been tabled. The *Western Mail* of 15 November reported that

"Labour Party managers now hope that anti-barrage MPs will unite behind a compromise amendment and not vote against the Government Bill when it is debated in the commons on November 25th."

In the *Western Mail* on 19 April, after the debacle of the all-night sitting that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West and his friends arranged, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, was challenged, having sat on the fence for a long time, and said:

"I share the concern relating to the rising tidal level but since that is so all efforts are being made to protect the community and where necessary compensate for the effects. If I had been here, I would have voted for the Bill."

I am sorry that the Opposition oppose a Bill that will regenerate one of our greatest capital cities. It will create 49 per cent. more permanent jobs in the bay, 47 per cent. more houses, 54 per cent. more construction jobs, 46 per cent. more commercial space and 50 per cent. extra private sector leverage on investment. A run-down part of Cardiff will be regenerated for the benefit not only of the people of Cardiff and of Wales but of the United Kingdom. I therefore ask the House to oppose Labour's bogus amendment and support the Second Reading of the Bill.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before hon. Members go through the Division Lobbies, I must inform them that I have been told that there is a bomb scare at Bridge street, as a consequence of which the area has been sealed off and hon. Members may be inhibited from getting into the House. In the light of that information, and pending further information, I intend to take a relaxed view about the time of locking of the doors.

The House having divided: Ayes 130, Noes 278.

Division No. 16] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'ht'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*

Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of seven Members, four to be nominated by the House and three by the Committee of Selection.

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than the fourteenth day after this day, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the Select Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) above is presented, or if all such Petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Select Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee.

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

That the Select Committee have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom and to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it.

That three be the Quorum of the Select Committee.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

King's Cross Railways Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That the Bill shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the last Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table.

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

7.14 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): The House will recall that the Bill seeks powers for works in the area of King's Cross and St. Pancras stations to increase capacity for British Rail and, indeed, for underground customers and to provide new rail services across London using Thameslink. It will also give London its second international station for trains via the channel tunnel, whether they finish their journey in London or continue to the midlands, to the north of England or to Scotland.

There have been some important developments since the Bill was last debated in the House almost a year ago. Provided that the motion is passed tonight, there will, I hope, be a further opportunity to debate the scheme in more detail before long.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my hon. Friend worried—as I am—that the Bill will perhaps not get through to the next stage given the fact that this morning the Northern Region Councils Association—a Labour-dominated body—wrote to every Member of Parliament in the northern region asking them to be present for this important debate? As he can see, I am the only Member of Parliament from the northern region who is here apart from, I think, one Labour Member of Parliament who is a Whip. Is not that a disgraceful state of affairs?

Mr. Waller: It demonstrates how assiduously my hon. Friend serves his constituents, and I am delighted to see him here. He is a most welcome supporter of the Bill

It would be helpful if I brought the House up to date on what has happened during the past year, so that hon. Members can take recent developments into account when making up their minds if and when they vote later.

On 8 May this year the Committee debating the Bill met for the 53rd and final day under the chairmanship—on that occasion—of my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). It was to examine the amendments and the additional provisions that were required in the Committee's report which, the House will recall, was published in June of last year. The provisions were accepted and the Bill has returned to the House for consideration.

Concern has been expressed about the letter sent to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport by Senor Carlo Ripa di Meana. The letter refers to King's Cross and the channel tunnel rail link. It is essentially a matter for the Government and I believe that they will be able to demonstrate that the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which, it will be recalled, they introduced to meet European Community directive No. 85337, conform to that requirement. I also believe that the manner of Senor di Meana's intervention demonstrated to the full that the Government are right to stress the principle of subsidiarity which holds that the Commission should not become involved in matters that can more effectively be dealt with by member states. However, I do not wish to stray too far from the motion.

The last time the Bill was debated in the House I assured the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—whom I am delighted to see here—that a revised environmental statement on the project proposals would be available before the Bill was debated again. That environmental statement has now been published to conform to the Committee's requirements. Also, in May this year, British Rail submitted to the Secretary of State for his approval route proposals for a high-speed link from the channel tunnel to central London and a comparative analysis of other routes. After careful deliberation my right hon. and learned Friend made a statement on 9 October to the effect that he intended to ask British Rail to refine Ove Arup's proposed eastern approach to London sufficiently to allow public consultation to take place on that route and, indeed, for it to be safeguarded. At the time of that announcement, the Secretary of State also made clear his support for a King's Cross terminal, which he described as

"essential not only to meet the need of the travellers within London, but . . . also crucial to serve the requirements of those who live elsewhere in Britain".

We come back to that point again and again. The new King's Cross scheme is vital as a national project, and for commuters and people living in the capital.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am sure that my hon. Friend accepts that there is no mutual inconsistency in the two schemes. I fear that people in the north have been somewhat misled by the *Yorkshire Post* and by others. It has been suggested that the decision to go east of London to Stratford will be detrimental to people in the north. Far from being the case, that scheme is vital for freight traffic and the King's Cross delevopment links intimately and properly into that scheme.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend is right. There has been some misunderstanding about the position. From the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, it is clear that he regards it as vital that King's Cross should go ahead as an essential part of the entire project. It would be wrong not to move in that direction.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It is important for the north of England that King's Cross is allowed to proceed. One of the concerns of people in the north is whether sufficient finances will be provided to ensure that the project about which the Secretary of State spoke a few months ago will be allowed to continue. Can the hon. Gentleman prevail on his right hon. and learned Friend to

[Mr. William O'Brien]

give us the assurance that there will be funds—public funds if necessary—to ensure that the King's Cross scheme goes ahead?

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport may say a few words about funding if he feels that it is appropriate.

I stress that King's Cross would offer advantages even if no rail link were built. It will offer advantages to international and to domestic travellers. When we debated the matter last year, some hon. Members opposed the Bill on the ground that they opposed the then route for the rail link. The fact that we are here again, just as keen to see the King's Cross project coming into being, demonstrates clearly that the two schemes are and always have been separate. As long as the Bill goes through Committee and receives a Third Reading, the King's Cross project will go ahead regardless of the timing of the link between the channel tunnel and London. It stands independently as a valuable scheme.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that since the decision by the Secretary of State on the channel tunnel route to London, British Rail has appointed consultants to advise on the possibility of building the Eurostation above ground, rather than building it underground as proposed in the Bill?

Mr. Waller: Is the hon. Gentleman thinking about the Alan Baxter scheme? British Rail did not appoint Alan Baxter to advise on that matter; the company was a consultant to British Rail on a different matter. British Rail had no knowledge that the company would produce an alternative scheme for an international terminal above ground. I will come to that matter a little later, as the hon. Gentleman will hear.

Mr. Dobson: It would help other hon. Members to know whether British Rail has asked consultants to advise on whether it would be possible to build a satisfactory station above ground rather than underground, as proposed in the Bill.

Mr. Waller: To the best of my knowledge, there has been no such request by British Rail. I am sure that British Rail has considered all the options and it may have asked the consultants to study alternatives. I am clear that the proposal that we are discussing, which involves a two-level station, is the best for Londoners and the best for travellers, whether international or domestic. Let there be no mistake about that.

The needs of international and of domestic travellers dovetail at King's Cross. It is easily accessible by train, by tube, by bus and by taxi. As a result, most passengers arriving for international trains are expected to do so by public transport rather than by car, thus avoiding congestion on local roads. I know that such congestion has been a major concern among hon. Members.

The changes include longer platforms so that longer trains can be run, offering more capacity, and a new passenger concourse building to link the two stations. The other significant development is the new connections and platforms for Thameslink, allowing Network SouthEast to introduce trains from Peterborough and Cambridge across London to Gatwick airport, to Kent and to Sussex. That will give London its first express route across the capital and it will be a boon to many travellers.

From the north of England and Scotland, the proposals provide for through and connecting international trains. They will also cut journey times to Gatwick and to the south coast. A first-class interchange at King's Cross is also important for passengers from the west midlands, from the north-west of England, from north Wales and from the west of Scotland using existing rail services at Euston. British Rail has decided to have a dedicated, high-quality link between the stations and is examining a number of options effectively to make Euston part of the international terminal complex.

Mr. Dobson: Exactly how will British Rail connect Euston and King's Cross stations? The British Library sinks seven storeys below ground on the other side of St. Pancras station. How can British Rail have an adequate link? During the previous debate, it was said that trains would be able to proceed from the north-west, with a bit of dodging about in Hampstead, to King's Cross. An arrangement allegedly involving Euston, King's Cross and St. Pancras was not mentioned. The stations are a long way apart.

Mr. Waller: I will come to the hon. Gentleman's final point shortly. All that I can say on the fixed link between Euston and the new complex—because I mentioned that a number of options are still being considered—is that it will be a dedicated link. Some of the roads in the vicinity which are owned by British Rail, for example, may be used and a bus may travel on a dedicated route or on a dedicated track. At this stage, I cannot say what the link will be, although I can say that it will be a dedicated, high-quality link.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waller: I ask the hon. Gentleman to let me continue at this stage. I am sure that he will seek to make his own speech in the debate.

I will respond to the hon. Gentleman's other point. Interchange by the Euston-King's Cross link will complement the through international train services that British Rail plans to run from the north-west and the west midlands to Paris and Brussels. Initially, the services will operate through existing routes through west London. They will be diverted to run through the King's Cross low-level station when it opens using the proposed West Hampstead chord line for which British Rail seeks powers in the British Railways (No. 3) Bill.

A recent development that the House will wish to take into account is represented by the publication last month of a so-called "alternative strategy" document produced by consulting civil and structural engineers Alan Baxter and Associates. It might be considered surprising that the firm refused to supply British Rail with a copy of its report prior to publication, even though much of the information it used was obtained in its capacity as consulting engineers to the BR board in relation to a planning appeal for a location to the north end of the King's Cross site. One may ask what account the firm took of the duties it owed of confidentiality and good faith, bearing in mind that, far from inquiring whether the BR board would object, it did not even say what it was doing.

A detailed study of the strategic document reveals why it is not difficult to understand that there was some unwillingness to have it subjected to detailed transport analysis. If hon. Members plan to refer to that document, it would be helpful if they addressed its basic flaws. Unfortunately, they were neglected, except in passing, in the full-page feature article in *The Independent* by Gavin Stamp and Jonathan Glancey on 20 November. Those journalists may know something about environmental issues, but if they understand transport issues, they were jolly well doing their best to conceal the fact.

An overwhelming difficulty with the Baxter proposals for King's Cross is that they make no provision for any improvement to Network SouthEast's Thameslink cross-London services, which is an essential element of the British Rail plan. The position for the international station chosen by Baxter would make it impossible to provide any route between Thameslink and the east coast main line. It is only by placing the new station beneath the existing one that all the required rail connections can be made. Baxter, rather weakly, tried to find a virtue in separating the express and local services. In truth the main justification for the scheme is utterly dissipated.

The Baxter plan does not permit the operation of international trains to King's Cross before the completion of a new rail link from the channel tunnel. The completion date for the rail link is uncertain. Therefore, it is obvious that one of the most important features of the scheme—the fact that the rail link and the international station can be considered independently—would be lost. The disruption of train services during the work would be on a much greater scale than under the British Rail plan.

Major problems would also be caused to the high proportion of international passengers at King's Cross—perhaps they would represent as many as three quarters of the total of such passengers. They would be expected to interchange at King's Cross with London Underground and other BR services. However, the need for some form of travolator or form of fixed link would involve an extra change, which is avoidable and would be provided at the expense of convenience and journey time.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): There is a risk of a misleading illusion being formed and I know that my hon. Friend would wish to avoid that. My hon. Friend said that the Baxter station would prevent the arrival of international trains at King's Cross before the creation of a rail link. He then said that about three quarters of all international passengers will end up at King's Cross. However, are we not talking about two propositions divided by a considerable number of years?

Mr. Waller: It is impossible to know. However, my hon. Friend may have misunderstood me. I said that three quarters of the total number of international passengers are expected to interchange at King's Cross with London Underground and other BR services.

Mr. O'Brien: Reference has been made to services to King's Cross for passengers who will travel from the north and other parts of England and from the continent. There is no InterCity link between London King's Cross and the Stratford terminal. Therefore, the link between Stratford and King's Cross is of great importance. Will the hon. Gentleman persuade the Secretary of State of the necessity of that InterCity link going ahead, because it is important to the entire system? If the proposed scheme is to succeed, we must have that InterCity link.

Mr. Waller: My right hon. and learned Friend has said as clearly as possible that he regards the second London terminal at King's Cross as an intrinsic part of the scheme.

It may be of significance to hon. Members with constituencies in the King's Cross vicinity that, at the very least, the alternative Baxter scheme will be no less disruptive to homes, highways and places of work than the BR proposals. It is clear from an examination of the Baxter proposals in depth that many of the disadvantages have not been addressed seriously. I shall be interested to hear any arguments in favour of that proposal, for it would be easy to knock them down. I do not regard the Baxter alternative as a serious proposition.

Mr. Dobson: I understand from the hon. Gentleman that the station provided for in the Bill is intended to serve trains coming initially along a different route—not from Stratford—to the Euroterminal. Will that station then be fit, without any redesign or rejigging, to take trains that have come via Stratford?

Mr. Waller: That is an important question. The alignment of the station does not have to change at all to take account of the new east route into London in favour of which my right hon. and learned Friend has declared himself. There should be no misunderstanding about that. On previous occasions, hon. Members have opposed the Bill for that very reason, as they thought that, by bringing the Bill forward, it represented a commitment to the southern approach to London. That is not the case.

The Bill has been before the House for three Sessions. It has been debated on several occasions and it had its Second Reading in May 1989 when it was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). In two previous debates similar to this one, it has enjoyed a substantial majority in support.

The Select Committee, under the expert chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), considered the proposals in detail over 53 days. That was the longest time given to any private Bill since the Great Western Railway Bill of 1835.

The scheme is of strategic, national importance. The House has given a great deal of detailed attention to the Bill, and the promoters and the petitioners have devoted a great deal of time and effort to the case. Surely it would be right for the House to consider the Committee's amendments as soon as possible in this Session. That requires the Bill to be revived tonight so that it can continue its progress.

I commend the motion.

7.37 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I oppose the carry-over motion for the Bill, as I did when we debated it a year ago.

The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) referred to the length of time and the detailed scrutiny that the Committee gave to the Bill. The Committee gave British Rail a ferocious roasting over the way in which it had introduced the Bill and prosecuted its case. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand if some of us treat with a certain amount of scepticism some of the assurances that BR has subsequently given.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves what this Bill does. It gobbles up 17 acres of land and property in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to create a low-level box that will include platforms and railway lines serving the channel tunnel traffic, Thameslink and other commuter traffic. It involves the loss of 83 homes and the displacement of 326 residents, the demolition of four listed buildings and the loss of 168 work places providing 1,620 jobs. It will mean the loss of 58 shops, 38 of which provide key services to local people. It will result in the destruction of Camley street natural park, which is used by thousands of local school children. It will necessitate six years of construction work for 24 hours, seven days a week, which will render many of the homes in that district uninhabitable for substantial periods. It will also mean the diversion of two major traffic arteries over temporary roadways for three years.

Therefore, in the light of those consequences, it behoves the House to assure itself that there is no conceivable alternative to the British Rail proposals and that they will achieve the aim that we all want—the ability of channel tunnel traffic to serve the whole country, not just London. I do not believe that British Rail has got it right. I argue the same case this year as I did last year, but with greater justification.

A number of factors relating to the King's Cross proposals have changed. Last Wednesday the London Underground (King's Cross) Bill received its Third Reading. That Bill extracted from the King's Cross Railways Bill those items of work relating to safety improvements at the London underground station at King's Cross following the Fennell report on the King's Cross fire. London Underground correctly realised that it would be better for it to make its proposals as a separate Bill, which it has done, and the Bill has now passed through the House. Therefore, that section of the King's Cross Railways Bill relating to those works is effectively redundant and the relevant clauses will have to be removed.

In addition, the Secretary of State has recently made an announcement on the decision to bring the high-speed link in from the east via Stratford rather than from the south. It is extremely important to the case for assessing whether we should proceed with the King's Cross proposals as currently enshrined in the Bill.

The European Commissioner for the environment has said that he believes that there has been a failure to carry out a proper environmental impact assessment. That is also important.

Mr. O'Brien: I am following my hon. Friend's contribution closely and I appreciate his concern as a constituency Member. He referred to the European Commissioner's comments on the environmental assessment. Is the environmental assessment to which my hon. Friend referred the same one as that referred to by the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) who I understood to mean the King's Cross project, while my hon. Friend was referring to the high-speed link? Will my hon. Friend clarify that?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has identified an extremely important point. The European Commission's principal complaint is that, in order to be properly conducted, an environmental assessment should consider not only the station, but the high-speed link—the two should be considered together. British Rail has so far totally failed to do so.

There has also been a High Court decision on the rights of the trustees of St. Bartholomew's hospital in relation to a substantial portion of British Rail land at King's Cross. That decision found in favour of St. Bartholomew's and against British Rail, and has thrown some of British Rail's funding calculations into a degree of confusion.

In addition to all those new factors, several alternative proposals—including some involving King's Cross—have emerged. The hon. Member for Keighley mentioned the Baxter scheme. I hold no specific brief for the Baxter scheme, but it has attempted to demonstrate that alternative schemes could be produced that would retain the Government's proposal for a terminus—an interchange—at King's Cross, but states that the plan would be more satisfactory if it were achieved without creating an enormous hole in the ground which British Rail proposes, with all the consequent destruction of homes, jobs and local neighbourhood.

My argument remains principally that King's Cross cannot cope with the proposed doubling of passengers at peak hours. Even if the Government and Opposition spokesmen are wedded to the idea of having King's Cross as an interchange for the channel tunnel, they do not have to use the scheme proposed in the Bill. I believe that we should not proceed with the Bill. British Rail should go back to the drawing board, look at the line and the station together, and produce a new, properly worked out Bill that addresses both the line and the station. In his article 169 letter, the European Commissioner stated that it was important that the rail link and the station should be considered together in terms of the environmental impact assessment if the European Community directive, signed by the Government and agreed to by this country, were to be met.

One of my constituents was in touch with my colleague, the European Member of Parliament, Ken Collins, who chairs the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, to seek his advice on what the European Commissioner had done and the reasons behind his action. Mr. Collins's letter to my constituent, which is extremely clear, states:

"In the case of the rail link, there would have been no proposal to build a terminal, were it not for the need to provide one for the Channel Tunnel rail link. The Commission is of the view that by dividing the project into two, the requirements of the directive are circumvented . . . there will be no environmental impact assessment of the project as a whole, taking into account the direct and indirect effects of the rail link and terminal."

The letter stresses that we breach the European directive in that we fail to consider the environmental impact of the station and the high-speed link together, as a whole, with all the direct and indirect consequences.

Mr. O'Brien: We could be accused of confusing the issue of environmental assessments. Such assessments must follow the planning application. As there are two separate applications—one for the King's Cross project and one for the high-speed link—it is difficult to see how the two environmental assessments can be taken together. My hon. Friend should consider that point carefully because people may be misled, as his constituent was.

Mr. Smith: The problem is precisely that the two applications, which will be the subject of two separate Bills, are being considered separately. It has long been my view, and I have argued consistently, that the two applications should be considered together. That would be preferable to the ridiculous procedure of considering a station in one Bill and a high-speed link in another. The sensible thing would be to examine the project in its entirety. If we did that, there would be much less of a problem and we would not be in such deep water with the European Commission.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is dying to intervene.

Mr. Snape: I merely seek clarification. I am following carefully what my hon. Friend says and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), I am aware of the deep personal and constituency interest that he has in the matter. How would it be possible to take the two applications together when, thanks to the Government's incompetence, there is not yet a scheme to run trains to King's Cross? All that the Government have decided so far is to cancel the scheme which British Rail spent hundreds of millions of pounds of our money developing. Returning to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, those of us who have constituencies north of London are anxious to ensure that when the channel tunnel opens in 1993—that is the only certainty in the project—at least some attempt has been made to provide the essential services without which areas north of London will receive no benefit from this enormous project.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend identifies precisely the problem with which we have been landed by the Government and British Rail. They have made proposals for a station which are unattached to any proposals for a means of getting there. I should have thought that it was much more sensible to make proposals from the start for both a station and a link. If we allow the King's Cross Railways Bill to proceed and in the end no high-speed link or underground link between Stratford and King's Cross is built, we shall be left with an enormous white elephant at King's Cross with no means of getting to it from the channel tunnel. It is important to consider the link and the station together, and British Rail and the Government should have done so from the word go.

Mr. Snape: There is a small matter which I should draw to my hon. Friend's attention. I am sure that he saw the depressing report in *The Sunday Telegraph* that, with its customary foresight and thoughtfulness, the Treasury had decided to reject the Thameslink project. However, if that project goes ahead, we shall have some way, if not a particularly adequate one, of getting trains from the midlands and the north of England to the south of England, provided that the Hampstead chord line is also built. Temporarily for a few years trains could use that Thameslink line.

Mr. Smith: In theory my hon. Friend is correct. The same could be said of the routes around the west of London. Through trains from the north could be taken round that way. I shall come to through services in a moment. My hon. Friend must also recognise that the Thameslink lines under central London would not be capable of taking the proposed high-speed trains which will come across from the channel tunnel.

The environmental impact assessment has earned the ire of the European Commissioner because it divorces the station from the link. But we must also recognise that the assessment which British Rail has carried out is deeply inadequate. There was no contact or consultation with local residents who would be affected. In assessing the impact on homes, British Rail completely missed out an entire family whose home in Caledonian road would be destroyed. It carried out a survey of the noise and vibration likely to be caused by the construction of the project and concluded that noise and vibration would be "unlikely to have a major impact."

Yet British Rail says that it will have to offer temporary rehousing for an extended period to many people who will be next door to the works because of the extent and nature of the noise and vibration that they will experience. How can an environmental impact assessment state that there will be no likely impact when British Rail has to admit that people will have to be temporarily rehoused? That demonstrates the inadequacy of the environmental impact work that has been done so far.

The first principal reason for not proceeding with the Bill at this stage is that the European Commissioner rightly identified serious failures in the environmental impact assessment work which should have been carried out. The second principal reason is that the Government's announcement of the route from the east via Stratford throws the scheme into question. British Rail asserts, and the hon. Member for Keighley said so again tonight, that in physical terms the planned exit of the lines from King's Cross at the south-eastern corner of the new proposed station is such that lines could go to Stratford just as easily as they could have gone southwards. I remain to be convinced. Let us remember that that assurance comes from British Rail, who, it was discovered in Committee proceedings on the Bill, designed platforms that were too short to take the trains that would come in to them. I wait to see conclusive proof that it is possible in physical and geographical terms to bring the lines from Stratford into the proposed station at King's Cross without making any changes whatever to the Bill. I will believe it when I see it.

Perhaps more importantly, the Stratford decision must throw the entire financing of the King's Cross station completely out of kilter. Neither the Government nor British Rail have told us exactly what the status of the Stratford station will be. Will it be a major interchange? How many passengers is it envisaged will get on or off the trains at Stratford? The answers to those questions are crucial to King's Cross. If passengers join or leave the trains at Stratford rather than King's Cross, fewer passengers will use the King's Cross interchange than was previously anticipated, so the cost per passenger that British Rail will have to pay to construct the station at King's Cross will increase.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, particularly because I was not here at the beginning of his speech.

Those of us who live in south-east London not three miles from King's Cross know that if we were taking our children to meet a continental train, or if we were taking elderly parents or grandparents to meet the train, we would not take them to King's Cross, because we could

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not park there or get them near the platforms. We would look for a station where we could park, say goodbye and then go home. King's Cross is not the right place for that sort of departure.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is right, and for once he is on all fours with British Rail. British Rail has long argued that most passengers travelling to and from King's Cross will do so by public transport. That is an important point in respect of the public transport congestion that will ensue around King's Cross. The hon. Gentleman's point was valid; many people will choose to use Stratford in preference to King's Cross. That in turn will have an impact on the financial calculations that British Rail will need to do for the construction of the new station at King's Cross.

We are talking about an expensive operation. In May this year, British Rail estimated that the cost of King's Cross would be £610 million for the channel tunnel part of the project, £220 million for the Thameslink part and £570 million for the other works, a total of £1·4 billion for the construction of the interchange. If inflation continues at the same rate as it has maintained over the past couple of years, the estimate by the end of next year will be £2·2 billion for that construction.

Unless the Government start being rather more generous than they have hitherto said they will be, British Rail will not be able to secure the private sector funding that it would want, given the reduced passenger flows at King's Cross which it must anticipate.

Mr. O'Brien: I can see that this debate is developing into a north-south divide. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) says that he wants to use Stratford interchange because of its better parking, but we from the north would find Stratford very inconvenient. We would want to use King's Cross. The channel tunnel is being developed supposedly to benefit the whole country, but I fear that a "them and us" problem is beginning here. I hope that hon. Members will view the issue objectively and constructively from now on.

Mr. Smith: That too is a valid point, but my hon. Friend anticipated me: I was about to discuss through services to the north, which are extremely important.

It seems to me that the choice of the eastern route—the decision to locate a major interchange of some sort at Stratford—means that fewer passengers will come through King's Cross, so financing it will be more difficult since a great deal of money is involved.

Mr. Snape: Although some of my hon. Friend's figures are valid, those of us with constituencies north of London objected to this proposal at the time because of the impossibility of getting from Stratford to anywhere north of London. My hon. Friend glibly says that many people will de-train at Stratford. Perhaps he will tell us where they will go and how they will get there.

Mr. Smith: Is my hon. Friend saying that the Government are wrong to have identified Stratford as the location for a major interchange? Does he wish to remove the possibility of industrial and economic regeneration in the east end of London—the whole purpose behind the campaign of the borough of Newham for the choice of Stratford as a terminal? Even the Secretary of State for the Environment has claimed regeneration as one of the principal reasons behind the Government's decision.

Mr. Snape: If my hon. Friend wants to line up with the Secretary of State for the Environment, I consider that he chooses his enemies even more recklessly than his friends. It is obvious from the railway geography of Stratford that it will be impossible, without billions of pounds' worth of public expenditure on the railways, to get anywhere from there. Surely it is not the function of a transport planner to locate an interchange at Stratford just because there is a vacant space there. The function of transport planning is to enable the rest of us to move around the country as best we can. We will certainly not be able to do that from Stratford, which is why my hon. Friends and I are determined to have a proper terminal at King's Cross from which we and our constituents can benefit.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend goes too far in attempting to write off his agenda the possibility of a major interchange at Stratford. I remind him that he and I strongly support the construction of the east-west crossrail under central London, to link Stratford and east London with west London and to provide thereby the possibility of direct links from Stratford to the west and to lines running out of Paddington. My hon. Friend is wrong to say that Stratford will never lead anywhere; it can become an important interchange.

Of course I appreciate that some of my hon. Friends passionately believe these things because they believe what British Rail has told them—that King's Cross is the only possible way of achieving links through to the north. I do not necessarily accept that view, although I understand why some people may.

It is perhaps worth examining what British Rail has said in the past few years about through services from the north to the channel tunnel. It has always claimed that one of the main advantages of its plan for King's Cross is that it offers—I quote the briefing material handed out at British Rail stands at the party conferences this year—

"the ability to handle through trains to continental Europe from the midlands, the north and Scotland."

The Channel Tunnel Act 1987 places an obligation on British Rail to provide such services. Section 40 requires British Rail to prepare by the end of 1989 a plan stating measures it proposes to take to secure

"the provision . . . of international through services serving various part of the United Kingdom, and an increase in the proportion of passengers and goods . . . carried by international through services."

British Rail produced its plan as required in a report entitled "International Rail Services for the United Kingdom" published in December 1989. The report said that from the opening of the channel tunnel British Rail planned to run four through trains during the day from Manchester, Wolverhampton, Leeds and Edinburgh and four during the night from Swansea, Plymouth, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Before the station at King's Cross was built, the trains would run on lines through south-west London. When the station is completed all services, except those from Swansea and Plymouth, would run through King's Cross.

After meeting the requirements of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 with those somewhat confident promises, British Rail published papers in June on the routes review, and they were strangely non-committal about through services.

The six-page memorandum by the British Railways Board made only three brief references to services for passengers north of London. Paragraph 22 states:

"While it remains the Board's intention to run certain through trains the majority of passengers from the Midlands, the North and Scotland will travel on connecting intercity trains via London rather than through trains."

Paragraph 31.6 states:

"There remains uncertainly about the through services from and to the Midlands, the North and Scotland."

In July and August this year the reason for the note of caution became clear. It emerged that the specification on which British Rail had been working for splitting trains to serve Wolverhampton as well as Manchester on the west coast main line and Leeds as well as Edinburgh on the east coast main line had proved unworkable because costs had risen far above the original estimate of £150 million. As a result, British Rail is now examining the feasibility of running shorter, non-splitting trains on the two lines. It seems that, far from fulfilling the requirement of the Channel Tunnel Act to increase the proportion of international passengers carried by through services, British Rail has embarked on an exercise which will reduce the proportion of through services from the north.

Mr. Waller: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be convenient for most international travellers from the north to seek an interchange at Doncaster or King's Cross? As there will be only two trains per day serving west Yorkshire, the majority of people would choose other trains and look for an interchange. Therefore, a first-class interchange of the kind outlined in the Bill is essential.

Mr. Smith: I am coming to that. British Rail appears to be reducing through services from the north. It should provide much more frequent through services from the north directly to the tunnel and the trains should not necessarily stop in the middle of London. Proper opportunities must be provided for people in the north and in Scotland. British Rail takes refuge in saying that people can come to King's Cross and interchange there. The importance of the interchange facilities then becomes crucial.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): What would happen to trains that left Sheffield on the midland main line? The line starts at Sheffield, which means that we shall get no through trains. However, we want an effective interchange. Will my hon. Friend answer the question posed by many industrialists in the north, especially in south Yorkshire? My hon. Friend spoke about impact studies. Economic impact studies carried out on our behalf clearly show that, unless decisions are made soon, investment that would come to the north of England will not come because of uncertainty. Decisions about interchanges at King's Cross and Stratford could lead to some stability about investment. That is important in terms of employment, the role of the channel tunnel and the through trains.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the current rate of progress there will be time for only three more speeches. Are you able to impose the 10-minute rule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Unfortunately, I cannot, and so far I have not heard anything out of order. I hope that hon. Members, and especially those who seek to intervene, will bear in mind the point that has just been made.

Mr. Smith: I have been extremely courteous in giving way to everyone who has sought to intervene. I wish to make some other important points on behalf of my constituents, who are directly affected by the Bill. I trust that the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) will not seek to deny me the opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents.

As I have said, interchange facilities are crucial. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) was right to draw attention to the economic impact of channel tunnel traffic. However, the Bill does not propose, nor does British Rail or the Government, that freight should come through King's Cross. It is even more important to get right the distribution of freight through the tunnel than it is to get right the movement of passengers to and from the tunnel. The Bill does not affect that one way or the other.

British Rail has repeatedly claimed that one of the great advantages of its proposal for a low-level station at King's Cross is that it will provide easy interchange facilities for passengers using Euston as well as King's Cross and St. Pancras. I accept that King's Cross and St. Pancras and the lines that serve those stations will be able to provide an interchange facility of a kind. However, British Rail also claims that passengers coming to or going from Euston will be able to use King's Cross as an interchange. Those stations are approximately 1km apart, and even on British Rail's estimate the proposed travolator between King's Cross and Euston would take 20 minutes for the journey. That assumes that the travolator will be built because, as we have heard, between St. Pancras and Euston is the six-storey basement of the new British Library.

When the British Railways Board member responsible for this issue gave evidence on the matter to the Committee in July 1989, he could only say that the engineering feasibility of a travolator was being investigated. He said:

"I very much hope that before this Committee finishes its deliberations we will be in a position to be more positive about it, and I personally hope we find it can be done, and for a reasonable price."

The Committee finished its deliberations a year and a half ago and there is still no news about how it will be possible to interchange between King's Cross and Euston. The King's Cross projects office was approached by one of my constituents last week and he was told that the engineers were still assessing possibilities. We are entitled to ask how on earth there can be good, proper, efficient interchange between Euston and King's Cross when, after two and a half years, British Rail has still been unable to come up with any detailed explanation of how it will be achieved.

Even if the interchange facilities operate well, there will be an impact on congestion at King's Cross itself. In 1987, the Piccadilly line westbound at peak hours was 10 per cent. over its maximum acceptable capacity. The Victoria and the Northern lines southbound from King's Cross and the Metropolitan and Circle lines eastbound from King's Cross were all very near to capacity. At that time, 19,900 passengers were arriving each day at King's Cross and St. Pancras between 7 and 10 o'clock in the morning. British Rail's expectation is that, with the new station being built at King's Cross, an additional 15,208 passengers will use

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the facilities during that period. That is almost double the number of people trying to force themselves on to an already overcrowded underground network.

Above ground, the congestion is likely to be as bad. British Rail's original traffic estimate—that there would be no perceptible impact—was risible. Even the Department of Transport is now recognising that people will come in taxis, buses or cars to meet people arriving at King's Cross. It is proposing a six-lane highway up Pentonville road to replace the existing Pentonville road, but rather than solving the problem that will only maintain the slow-moving traffic status quo.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: I will, but it must be for the last time.

Mr. Wilson: Is there not another side to the coin? The huge numbers of people arriving at King's Cross and Euston and wishing to travel on to the continent will create a fair amount of additional and unnecessary congestion if they all have to find a way to get out to the alternative that my hon. Friend seems to support.

Mr. Smith: I am not sure what point my hon. Friend is making. If a passenger comes to King's Cross to transfer immediately to the channel tunnel train, there is no question of having to go out to Stratford.

The problem is one of traffic and congestion impact, which will spread well beyond the immediate environment of King's Cross. Therefore, it is important that British Rail goes back to the drawing board and thinks again. There is a possible breach of European Community law if the station is proceeded with without any recognition of the environmental impact of the high-speed link leading to it. The financial viability of the King's Cross project must be in serious question now that the decision to create an additional station at Stratford has been taken.

As yet, there are no answers from the Government or British Rail about the status, size and impact of Stratford. It is possible that the potentially £1·5 billion project at King's Cross will pre-empt other important expenditure on which British Rail should be embarking, and that will have serious implications. There are no guarantees of frequent through services from the north and Scotland. We have no information on what will happen to freight. There is an expectation of serious congestion at King's Cross and there is a real possibility that, even if King's Cross is chosen for the location for channel tunnel traffic, rather than being in the precise location and form set out in the Bill, the station could be located elsewhere at King's Cross.

For all these reasons, the House should not proceed, at this stage, with the Bill in its present form.

8.24 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): It is my intention once again, as I have so often in other debates on this subject, to put down parameters and markers for those who come from the north. When I say "the north", I do not mean only 250 miles north but 50 miles up from King's Cross. The problems are the same no matter how far up the country one comes from.

This matter first came to my notice under your Chairmanship, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Court of Referees. We had an entertaining three or four days with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) who has a deep interest in the matter. We looked at the back ends of King's Cross and found wildlife in abandoned nooks and crannies, and discovered that double, if not treble, the number of people that the British Waterways Association thought were living on the canal actually did so. It was a fascinating hearing of the court.

We are debating a matter of deep importance to the north.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Hear, hear.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Lady always agrees with the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Miscampbell: Let us be fair. My hon. Friend agrees with me on most occasions.

It has been said that this is a matter of them and us, but it is not. It is them, but it is not us. We are speaking for the whole country and for a far bigger constituency than that of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. We can hardly overestimate the importance to the north of the decision that we are making. If there is to be a high-speed link, it must come through to King's Cross and it ought to come through—so that we start at both ends together, so that we know that it is there. The Bill will allow that to happen. Nothing needs to be changed to allow that to be done.

However, this is basically a decision for the Government. It is most desirable that we have a clear and unequivocal decision. As has been said, if the link terminates at King's Cross, all is not lost. We may be able to have the Stratford complex as well as King's Cross, but this will all cost money. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) will agree with me when I say this. The Labour party may be saying it anyway, but we must also say that money must come from the Government. We cannot get it from private enterprise, and there is no way round that. It should be made clear that if the north is to be looked after, money must come from the Government.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My hon. and learned Friend will have retired by then.

Mr. Miscampbell: It may be that if the money does not come from the Government, others will retire as well.

Mr. Dobson: Although King's Cross station is in my constituency, I have always believed that it was right to have the Eurostation at King's Cross. However, I am extremely dubious about the underground proposals that are before us. If British Rail were confident in its assertion that it can deliver an adequate service to the north through its proposals, why did it advise the original promoter of the Bill not to accept my instruction to the Committee that it should assure itself that this proposal would guarantee a fast, frequent and reliable service to the north and Scotland?

Mr. Miscampbell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I shall not take up the content of it, because I am not in a position to comment on the burning constituency problems of the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). We all, of course, understand the arguments that

they advance, but surely an overall decision must be taken. I accept that that will cause great trouble in Islington, and on that basis there may be potent arguments for an overground or underground system. It is not for me to interpose my views on that matter at this moment. I am merely saying that we need the development.

The truth is that Stratford is no substitute for King's Cross. Indeed, it can be only an adjunct to it. At the end of the day, it is King's Cross that will let us through into the entire network.

It is surely relevant to embrace in our consideration the area 50 miles up country and areas beyond all the way up to Glasgow. It is relevant also to consider what has happened in the north of England over the years. For example, about 100 years ago Liverpool was as large a port as New York, and had a far better dock system. In the context of the Bill, I am not all that fussed about passengers. After all, passengers can put themselves on a travolator, if necessary. I am more interested in the fact that the high-speed link will extend from King's Cross to both sides of the country, where millions live. It will extend to the manufacturing heart of the country.

I return to Liverpool, which is the first western port. It will never return to its days of glory, but I feel that it would double, treble or perhaps even quadruple its present throughput if it were known that freight could be handled more efficiently at the docks. The problems with Liverpool have been largely cured and the complaints have been met. Liverpool is all right in its docklands; it is not too bad at all.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There is the dock labour board.

Mr. Miscampbell: I shall not argue that matter now. I merely say that Liverpool is able to take its chance internationally. If the goods came into Liverpool and were able to enter the system by means of high-speed lorries, there would be beneficial consequences for us all. As I have said, there would be a transformation of the area 50 miles north of London. That is what we should be considering.

8.32 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall be brief because I know that others wish to speak. I support the carry-over motion. I appreciate the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I congratulate him on the way in which he has argued the interests of his constituents. I am sure that he will not be surprised, however, if I take a different view.

We must consider the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury along with the interests of many other people. Whenever there is a controversial development we find that there are many who want it, but not in their back yards. That is often the position in my constituency, and I am sure that many hon. Members have shared the experience.

King's Cross must be London's second international passenger terminal, but construction there is not yet secure because of the decision to route the high-speed rail link via Stratford. I am sure that the entire House appreciates that. It is crucial that the Bill continues on its way if we are to enable the development at King's Cross to take place.

What is the importance of King's Cross? It will be a nationally important facility for international passenger services to the north of England, to regions beyond London and to London itself. I shall quote some information that has been sent to Members representing northern areas over the past few days by the North of England Regional Consortium, which states:

"King's Cross will be the key terminal to link the North of England to the Channel Tunnel, allowing international trains to run directly along the Key Main lines beyond London.

King's Cross will provide an excellent interchange for passengers from the North of England, the Midlands, Scotland, Wales and Ireland wishing to catch high-frequency London Channel Tunnel trains.

King's Cross could be operational for significantly faster Channel Tunnel services providing a much-needed north-south link (via Thameslink line) as soon as the terminal is constructed—it does not have to wait for the HSRL to be built."

That is extremely important in this context. The consortium continues:

"King's Cross could be implemented with minimum delay because powers for its construction are being dealt with now.

King's Cross will provide excellent access to London itself."

In October, when the Government announced their decision on the high-speed rail link route, the British Rail-preferred route direct to King's Cross—the best for the north—was rejected in favour of a longer route via Stratford. All of us in the north were disappointed when that decision was made, but that is what happened. The announcement committed the high-speed rail link to terminate at King's Cross. On that basis, the passage of the Bill is the immediate test of the Government's commitment to secure a terminal development at King's Cross. We hope that the Government are sincere and that they intend pushing forward the Bill, which will meet channel tunnel demands.

The consortium believes that notwithstanding the commitment the Government's decision creates a real risk that the high-speed rail link will terminate at Stratford, and that because of the extra costs involved the project at King's Cross will never be built. To prevent that happening, three main objectives must be achieved. First, I take up one of the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), which the consortium puts in this way:

"King's Cross international must be developed at the earliest possible opportunity. The . . . Bill does not need alteration in view of the HSRL route decision and should now receive a swift and uncontroversial passage through its remaining stages."

I sincerely hope that it will. The consortium continues:

"Public money should be put into the King's Cross to Stratford line because this connection is of national strategic significance, recognising that from a commercial point of view the private sector cannot be expected to share the objective of connecting the HSRL to the rest of the UK network."

It is essential that public money is forthcoming.

I shall continue to quote the recommendations of the consortium. The next paragraph reads:

"Construction of the HSRL should begin at both ends, working towards the same time scale, so the link operates from day one of its completion from King's Cross. The chosen route is expected to cost £750 million more than the BR route and, considering that the original BR funding package of last year was rejected because it did not provide an adequate commercial return for the private sector and for financial reasons alone, is a severe threat to the Stratford to King's Cross Link."

It is British Rail's view that the link will be needed by 1998, and the Government's announcement suggests a

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

possible delay until the year 2005. Early high-speed rail link construction will ease congestion on existing lines while providing much-needed capacity.

Rail plans for Stratford should be made clear, if there are any. Any passenger facilities at Stratford must not dilute the full development of the King's Cross terminal project as proposed. Likewise, any freight facility at Stratford must not undermine the proposed development of freight facilities in the north. That is a factor which concerns me. In the areas that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton represent, there is delay at a freight station because a planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State. If a Berne gauge high-speed rail link capable of carrying freight to Stratford is proposed, northern firms will use road transport to Stratford—causing further congestion and environmental damage. The full impact of such a proposal on the rest of the United Kingdom must be considered, must be evaluated.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): My hon. Friend spoke cogently and with due emphasis about the importance of the evidence put to the House by the North of England Regional Consortium. He will be aware of my close connections with that organisation since its inception. My hon. Friend has worked hard to stress to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House how important it is to listen to the authentic voice of the north of England. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the interests of the north are bound up with the Bill's success. It is a test of representativeness—as to whether, if one comes from the north, one backs the Bill.

Mr. Lofthouse: I agree with my right hon. Friend. Some northern areas are depending on the King's Cross development. Certain areas of Yorkshire have been devastated by the decline of the mining industry, and hope to attract alternative manufacturing industry. Their success may depend on the King's Cross development.

Opposition to the Bill runs counter to the objectives of the main political parties. The route decision has already caused longer journey times between the north and continental Europe, additional costs to the high-speed rail link, and further delay and uncertainty. Before that decision was made, proponents of the Stratford scheme argued for further development King's Cross as well as at Stratford. They must not now be allowed to argue that there is no alternative.

We all recall the argument that Stratford was not an alternative to King's Cross. Having heard some of tonight's speeches, I hope that some people do not have it in mind that the King's Cross development should not go forward and that the main development should be at Stratford.

8.41 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Perhaps it would be convenient if I addressed the House very briefly at this point. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on the manner in which he presented his motion and spoke to it so eloquently. The Government support the revival motion, and I find myself in agreement with many of tonight's speeches about the importance of King's Cross and of the links, via not only the east and west coast but the midland main lines to the north of England.

I will comment briefly on five points that, although they do not directly affect the Bill, are relevant to the revival motion. As to the Commission's comments on the environmental assessment procedure, I confirm that the Government and British Rail do not seek in any way to circumvent the Community's requirements in terms of preparing a full environmental assessment. That applies not only to that stretch of the line for the new high-speed rail link between Detling and King's Cross that is under way—British Rail has already completed the work from Detling to Folkestone—but to the work on King's Cross station itself. There is no intention in any way to frustrate or to circumvent the rules. They are clearly understood within the whole Community, and British Rail and London Transport will honour them.

I agree with the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) in his reference to the implications of a station at King's Cross being opened before a high-speed rail link is completed and opened. That matter is for British Rail, but it ought to be possible for trains to run—instead of via the west London line—on Thameslink, through King's Cross, and on to the north.

That would require engineering work not only in the tunnel but in south London, but it should be possible in railway terms. If the station is ready before the rail link, that would bring an extra benefit.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to the London Underground, and he is right to say that the low-level interchange work is the subject of a separate Bill. I visited those works myself last Friday. However, the major part of London Underground's works at King's Cross are contained in, and depend on, the passage of the Bill before the House. They concern the widening and enlargement of the ticket hall, which is extremely crowded. Even London Underground's low-level interchange work will not solve that particular problem. That is another reason for reviving the passage of the Bill.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), who is temporarily absent from the Chamber, and several other hon. Members alluded to the scheme's funding. The Government have no specific proposal before them, but I confirm that it will be an extremely expensive project. It will include at least three elements of funding. The first is that portion due for the improvements to London Underground, which will be expensive; I have referred already to the larger ticket hall at King's Cross. Secondly, there will be improvements to Network SouthEast's Thameslink services. Anyone who has visited the Thameslink station at King's Cross knows that it is wholly inadequate. The platforms are small, and the tunnel is too narrow to take intercapital, channel tunnel trains, and is rather winding.

Network SouthEast will gain some benefit, so our investment appaisal for that portion of the work will follow the normal procedure in respect of new Network SouthEast investment. We will take into account cost-benefit appraisal techniques in assessing Network SouthEast's advantages, the channel tunnel services, and InterCity services. Several different elements of the heavy and underground railway combine in the project, so it will be difficult to appraise. Planning permissions will be

needed from Parliament, so we will have a clearer idea of what is feasible and possible. The Government will then give applications urgent consideration.

We are providing British Rail with sufficient funds to ensure that the necessary design and other work necessary to keep the project properly planned and prepared can be undertaken.

Mr. Dobson: Can the Minister throw any light on what is meant by British Rail's reference to a dedicated link between King's Cross and Euston stations? The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) spoke of a dedicated road, but none exists. The only road between Euston and King's Cross stations is Euston road, which is dedicated to traffic. An underground travolator would have to negotiate the six underground storeys of the British Library, and five tube lines between the two stations. There are no British Rail-owned roads that could contribute in any way to a dedicated connection between the two stations. Any such line would have to be underground, at ground level, or overground—but British Rail has not come up with any real answers.

Mr. Freeman: I share to a certain extent the hon. Gentleman's interest in how passengers are to travel between Euston and King's Cross. We must wait to see whether British Rail has in mind an elevated pathway, or something at ground level. Despite the hon. Gentleman's scepticism about the aspect, he must concede that it does not in any way invalidate the importance of a brand new station at King's Cross and St. Pancras—or the fact that those coming down the west coast main line will—through the benefit of the chord for which British Rail is seeking permission in the British Rail (No. 3) Bill—find that their trains can run into King's Cross station.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras makes a valid point, and I am not seeking to make light of it. However, the answer to his question—which is in the gift of British Rail, not me—does not in any way invalidate the Bill's importance and significance.

Mr. Dobson: The whole route——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I do not believe that the Minister wants to give way.

Mr. Freeman: I would like to make my fifth and final point, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will again catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The question of the rail link was raised by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport never said that he does not anticipate the completion of work on any high-speed rail link to be in 2005, or that construction will not begin before the year 2000. That was a misunderstanding. My right hon. and learned Friend was referring to the time when capacity would run out on Southern region, according to British Rail. What we have said is that if construction takes five years and planning permission and further work on the environmental assessment of the rail link takes three, the rail link cannot be completed before the end of the decade. We have also said that we want the private sector to be involved as much as possible in the financing of it.

The Wakefield terminal was not mentioned. I understand that the matter is subject to inquiry, so I am unable to comment, but the nine channel tunnel freight terminals are extremely important to British Rail. Stratford, if it were the terminus of a Berne gauge railway, could not possibly be a substitute for them. They are needed to carry freight from the regions, which are also important in passenger terms.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister give us a commitment that public funds will be made available to ensure that the high-speed link from Stratford to King's Cross goes ahead without any hitches or disappointments? Will he also tell us whether the two environmental assessments will be dealt with together or separately?

Mr. Freeman: We have made it plain that we do not favour a high-speed rail link that terminates at Stratford. We want the link to run through Stratford, with a station to take trains on to King's Cross. There is no question of passengers being stranded at Stratford—although Stratford is, of course, an important interchange, which will become more important as the years go by. The necessary links are within London—on crossrail, the Jubilee line and the docklands light railway.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley should respond to the question about environmental assessments. As I have said, however, both British Rail and London Regional Transport will comply with both the letter and the spirit of Community law, and will appreciate that the implications of the King's Cross assessment and those of the rail link assessment are inter-related.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. Friend plan to say anything about the burning issue of the electrification of the midland main line, which is of great concern to his constituents, among others? He has already written to me, and I am grateful to him for that; but can he now say whether the decongestion benefit that might result from electrification—which was referred to by the midland main line consortium—has any bearing on his current thinking? The question is very pertinent to the spur line link, which is mentioned in the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the Minister will need some ingenuity if he is to deal with that question while remaining in order.

Mr. Freeman: I appreciate that my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) have long been interested in the prospect of the electrification of the midland main line, but I do not think that it is directly relevant to the Bill. I assure my hon. Friends that I will write to them.

By the time that the high-speed rail link is completed and is running into King's Cross—the end of the decade—British Rail may well have electrified the line, in which event the trains will run through not only my constituency, but the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth.

I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will support the revival motion.

8.54 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): We are discussing a revival motion. The principles of the Bill were agreed on Second Reading, and it was discussed in detail in Committee. If the House passes the motion, amendments made in Committee can be discussed further, and, no doubt, the Bill will be given a Third Reading.

[Mr. Peter Snape]

There is a degree of cross-party support for the Bill—and, of course, some cross-party opposition. The scheme will benefit domestic as well as international passengers. It is fair to mention the benefits that will be experienced by Londoners, and those living and commuting in the south of England. For example, the longer platforms at King's Cross will allow longer trains to be run, which will relieve the overcrowding problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has pointed out that the platforms were originally not long enough to accommodate the trains that are now proposed. Despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) may think, I do not set myself up as an apologist for British Rail; BR did not pay me very well in the days when I worked for it, and now that it does not pay me at all I certainly do not intend to rush to its defence. However, I liked BR's rejoinder—that the trains were longer than originally planned because of the requirements of Customs and immigration in regard to drink. My hon. Friend sniggers. I remind him that a good half coach may be taken up by such provisions, and that, regardless of whether they are essential, they will be included in the through trains if and when they are introduced.

Mr. Dobson: That was not the reason given by the Committee, in three successive sittings. It argued that the platforms were long enough on the ground of measurements that had already been made.

Mr. Snape: I leave the House to decide whether the platforms were too short or the trains too long. Certainly British Rail has advanced a number of interesting explanations for the problem.

The scheme also authorises a link from the east coast main line into St. Pancras to take additional Network SouthEast trains from the Great Northern Line, as well as high-speed trains running between St. Pancras and the Bounds Green depot. It allows an enlargement of the underground station to meet the recommendations of the Fennell report; and, perhaps most important, it allows the extension of the Thameslink network. I hope that all of us who take an interest in railway matters will see the significance of that.

At present, the northern and southern railways, and those running through London, are constrained by capacity problems. The new station would allow two 12-car Thameslink platforms to replace the present cramped eight-car King's Cross Thameslink station, to which the Minister of State has just referred. Two weeks ago I visited that station for the first time. The fact that so many additional trains could go from Peterborough, Huntingdon, King's Lynn and Cambridge in the north to —*[Interruption.]* In the case of Huntingdon, I am not sure whether there would be cut-price fares on that line to Thameslink, but that is one of the places where services would be improved by the scheme. Trains would run through to many points in the south. The scheme would also allow more cross-London local services to serve other inner London areas.

In a speech that was as relevant as it was comprehensive my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that he thought that Stratford was a suitable alternative terminus. I made my disagreement plain during my hon. Friend's speech. I do so again now. It is inconceivable that through passenger trains could run to Birmingham, or to other places in the midlands and the north, via Stratford. My hon. Friend mentioned the east-west crossrail and suggested that that would be the way for our constituents to complete their journeys. The purpose of the east-west crossrail is the alleviation of congestion on the underground and on roads in London. It is neither fair nor reasonable for my hon. Friend to suggest to those of us who represent constituencies north of London that our constituents should leave a trans-Europe train at Stratford and make their way, via the east-west crossrail, to the London terminus from which they wish to continue their journey. That is hardly the benefit that many of us envisaged when we supported the channel tunnel project.

Mr. Chris Smith: The east-west crossrail provides the potential for direct links from Stratford through to Paddington, Reading, Bristol, Cardiff and the west. That is not possible from King's Cross. If we were to accept my hon. Friend's argument and agreed that King's Cross should be a location for channel tunnel traffic because of its potential for links to the north, does he agree that it would not necessarily have to be this exact scheme at King's Cross? Does he agree that it is not the only possible option for a terminus there?

Mr. Snape: This is the only scheme that is before us. I have been in this place long enough to know that if one wants to knock a project on the head one merely produces on the back of an envelope—or, in the case of British Rail, through tracing paper on the kitchen table—a scheme that guarantees that there will be years of controversy to follow. Unacceptable though this scheme may, in part, be to my hon. Friend, it is the only one that provides us with any reasonable degree of security that there will be any service at all north of London after 1993 when the channel tunnel opens.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): The hon. Gentleman is busily telling the House what we ought to be doing. Can he tell the House what he would do, if he were in Government, about electrifying the midland main line north of London?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to tell the hon. Member, as I said to the Minister for Public Transport, that he will find if very difficult to keep in order in answering that question.

Mr. Snape: In that case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I may use the same ingenuity as did the Minister for Public Transport. It is important that the hon. Gentleman's constituents and all the people who live alongside the midland main line should benefit from the project. I agree that they could best do so through electrification. Given, however, that all the signalling on the midland main line would need to be immunised prior to electrification and that all British Rail's signalling resources appear to be devoted to improving boat train routes Nos 1 and 2 in the south of England, we are still some way off that happy time when electrification could take place. I support the hon. Gentleman's demand, but it does not look as though electrification could take place without detailed preliminary work that would take a considerable time to complete.

Proper and direct Government involvement from the first day would have been the ideal solution in the case of

this vexed project. This is the greatest civil engineering project in the United Kingdom this century. It is, I am sad to say, typical of the Government that every detailed question that is put to Ministers receives virtually the same answer—"these are matters for British Rail." They shuffle off responsibility and deprive the people whom they blame of the resources to do the job. That makes many of us despair of the Government and their transport policy—to dignify the present shambles with such a name. It is no good the Minister shaking his head. He is as guilty as other Ministers. We would not be in the current mess if the Government had accepted their responsibilities from day one.

Although the motion is far from ideal, it is the only way forward. Responsibility for the mess should be placed fairly and squarely on transport Ministers and on the mandarins and Ministers at the Treasury who work the glove puppets to whom all too often one listens and who have got this country's transport infrastructure into the mess that it is in today—a mess that only the election of a Labour Government will go some way to turning around.

9.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I shall be very brief.

The last time that I spoke in the House, I said that, although I had not always been as charitable towards British Rail as I could be, the time had come to pass on beyond my complaints and to bury the hatchet. *Hansard* recorded that without the word "beyond", so it appeared as to pass on complaints about British Rail. We must make as positive a contribution as we can. In that spirit, I suggest that if it could come to an accommodation with the British Library for a travolator to pass through the basement, there would be amazing possibilities for improving the literacy of a whole number of passengers since the speed at which the train would be allowed to proceed would be unquestionably quite slow.

Since the Bill was last before the House, we have had several changes. If we confine ourselves to the high-speed rail link alone, we find that whereas before it was not to be of European gauge it is now to be of UIC gauge. Before, it was lamentable to imagine that it would go to Stratford; now, it is going to Stratford. Before, as the former Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) said, it was highly unlikely that freight would use the new line; now, it is to be worked up for freight—changes that I greatly welcome and are absolutely sound. I congratulate the Government on having been persuaded, after a great deal of time, that we were not as daft as we appeared.

Mr. Dobson: All that has happened is that it has been decided that the route will not go through south London; no firm decision has been made that it will go to Stratford or anywhere else.

Mr. Rowe: My understanding is that there is a firm decision that it is going to Stratford. How it will get there is as opaque as it always has been.

That brings me to another point that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who temporarily is not in the Chamber, made about the Baxter scheme for King's Cross. He said that it has no less impact on houses, buildings and the environment than the present scheme. My understanding of the Baxter scheme is that, apart from anything else, it would have preserved the Great Northern hotel. Whether that is germane or not, if that is so, it shows clearly one of British Rail's continuing weaknesses—that it has an extraordinary inability to count the number of buildings that will be affected or to identify them. British Rail persuaded the Government that a change to the safeguarded part of the route would not have any consequences for any listed building. It is wrong. If the final freight route is one of a number of highly likely routes, the change required in the corridor passing through my constituency will directly affect a listed building. If British Rail wishes to carry conviction in this place, it must be much more accurate.

We have been informed that the project will cost £1·4 billion. The new high-speed rail link—we are not sure where it will go—will cost about £4·2 billion for 55 miles of new line. I understand that the Germans can build a new railway for about £20 million a mile. My point is that, even after all this time, there is little certainty about any of British Rail's cost predictions. When there is, the projects seem to be very expensive. There should be a much closer look at the costs, both of the King's Cross terminal and of the line to it.

Given the fluid situation and the fact that nothing is the same as when the Bill was first presented, we should compare the costs of the present scheme with those that Kent, for example, will have to pay. There is a danger that there will be no international station at Ashford, which would be absurd. I took some comfort from my hon. Friend the Minister when he said that it was manifestly a benefit to have a station before a line was built. That is true for Ashford as for King's Cross.

My hon. Friend the Minister could do a lot worse than turn British Rail's attention to the new buildings that Kent county council's education authority has commissioned for schools. Such buildings have an estimated life of 60 to 70 years, but they can easily be uprooted and moved elsewhere. They can be clad so that they fit into almost any environment. I was impressed by the quality of those buildings and by the fact that they can be moved. Given that British Rail is always uncertain about where its stations will be, it may find that buildings that can be moved around the country are of great benefit.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend and neighbour for giving way. He makes an extremely good point about fluidity with regard to the channel tunnel rail link and particularly the need for the King's Cross terminal. Would not British Rail be better served investing money in the appalling service that it provides in north Kent which causes our constituents such inconvenience and discomfort? Our constituents have been asked to pay about 8 per cent. more for their season tickets next year, taking the cost of, for example, a Chatham ticket to more than £1,700. They have been told that they must invest for the future—for what future, that of King's Cross or that of the north Kent line?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that, in responding to that intervention, the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) will direct his remarks to the Bill and the revival motion.

Mr. Rowe: As I understand it, the Bill is to be revived because of the intention to proceed without delay to the building of the station. We contend that, in the highly fluid situation in which British Rail finds itself, it would be much better off attacking the problems endured by

[Mr. Rowe]

commuters in our part of the country than building a railway station, the line to which has not yet been designed or put out to tender. That is a powerful argument. If building were postponed, it would enable a certain amount of relief to be given to Kent.

The new national road transport forecasts had a high-growth and a low-growth scenario for Kent. The high-growth forecast has already been exceeded and traffic growth in Kent is almost double that predicted in 1984's national forecast. Before British Rail embarks on an enormously expensive and only partially designed chimera, we should give the unfortunate travellers of Kent a number of benefits, some of which could be easily provided.

First, there should be modern communications technology in the trains. There are no phones in the cabs, but there is no reason why drivers should not have portable phones. It is bizarre in this day and age that when trains break down—as they frequently do because of leaves on the line—the driver must stop the train and get out to ring up. Secondly——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again, but he must direct his remarks to this Bill and in particular to the revival motion. It is not in order to discuss another Bill which he might like to see before the House.

Mr. Rowe: I understand what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do not think that what I am proposing requires a Bill. If the Bill were not revived, the money that it is intended to spend would be made available to be spent on what I seek. However, I accept your correction.

Another change has been that the property market has collapsed. I understood that one of the reasons why the King's Cross station project was suggested was that British Rail expected to make a killing on the land that it would be able to develop as a result of its improvements to the railway station. That is known as making a more aggressive use of assets, as Mr. Chris Green wrote recently in the *Financial Times*. My concern is that under an aggressive use of assets one of his policies for Network SouthEast is to cut the back-up for trains to such a low level that should anything go wrong with a train—and our trains are the oldest on the network and are more likely to break down than any others—there will be no back-up provided.

When British Rail considers its assets, it would do well to wait to build the King's Cross station until it knows what it wants and what lines it must serve and until the property market has recovered. It should also spend the money that it proposes to spend on improving the travel-to-work life of many commuters, especially those in Kent, who are paying over the odds for a lousy service.

9.17 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I shall not detain the House for more than a few minutes, but it is important to stress that this is not a parochial debate and far less a debate about the merits or otherwise of local lines in Kent. The issue of a channel tunnel should be a great national debate and should have been a great national project. The tragedy of the past few years is that it has not worked out that way.

Having initiated the tremendous engineering project which we all admire and look forward to seeing come to fruition, the Government appear to have left it at that and the question of how the rest of the country is to be served by and benefit from that project has received pitifully little consideration.

The alternatives do not stand still or have benefits for all parts of the country. The alternatives are the positive approach which I advocated and the approach that ensures that all parts of Britain benefit from the channel tunnel. Otherwise, there will be a relative loss to the rest of the United Kingdom as more and more trade and commerce is drawn to the south-east by the lure of the channel tunnel. However belatedly, we must get out of the rut and begin—as a Labour Government will certainly do—to treat this as a huge national project to be undertaken seriously.

The motion is crucial for those of us who come from points north of London. It surprises me that no other Scottish party is represented on Conservative or on Opposition Benches——

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): It is.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend is in the same party as I am, as far as I understand. No other Scottish party is represented on Conservative or on Opposition Benches. I am delighted to be joined by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster).

The project is of immense importance to Scotland. If one looks across the channel, as some of us have, and sees the way in which the matter is approached there, it is humiliating to consider what has gone on in Britain over the past few years. Around Calais, construction work will create a massive new rail terminal and a road system to lead to the tunnel at Calais. Where is the comparative development in Britain? Huge development is taking place in the centre of Lille to create a rail hub for the whole of northern Europe. Where is the comparative thinking in Britain?

We are struggling tonight to achieve the first tentative step in Britain's planning, not for two or three years hence, but for the better part of a decade hence, and to achieve at King's Cross the equivalent of what has been under construction for several years at Lille. We are struggling for a terminal at which trains can come in from all parts of the country, at which there can be an interchange for the continent and at which people can move on relatively quickly.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has said, it would be better to have more direct trains to the continent. I hope that that will evolve in the fullness of time, but it will do so only when the electrification programme is extended to all parts of the country. For many years to come, there will be greater dependence on a good interchange than there can be on the prospect of direct services between Scotland, the north of England and Wales, and the channel tunnel and beyond. We must have the interchange.

As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said, it is true that better schemes may be available. The King's Cross scheme may not be perfect and I respect the views of local Members who say that it is far from perfect. However, it is the only scheme on the table. If the project does not get into gear now and if we go back to the drawing board, it will be decades before we get

another scheme that is worked through to the present level. In the meantime, all the benefits of the channel tunnel will be lost to my part of the country and to many others.

Let us get on with the scheme because there is no reason for further delay. My hon Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, when he argues against the disruption of his own constituency, is on stronger ground than when he tries to prove that King's Cross is not the best available option for an interchange. I will elaborate on the point that I made about the disruption that may be caused when additional tens of thousands of people are brought into the area, if the development at King's Cross goes ahead. Surely the best answer is to get most of them out again as quickly as possible. My hon. Friend conjured up images of people coming out of taxis and meeting friends. The best alternative is for people to cross the platform and to get away to where they want. That is the most efficient way.

I am not prepared to accept for the rest of the country the idea that, from now until the year dot, either everyone will have to struggle across London to get to Waterloo, which is how things will start, or worse, under the new madness that has been conjured up, everyone will have to struggle out to Stratford to catch the connections for the continent. Where is Stratford? That is an unreasonable expectation.

I regret that the link will not come through south London. I have no wish to tread on the toes of colleagues who have legitimate local interests, but from the national standpoint, I think that it is regrettable that the link will not take that route. Half the decision has already been taken and it seems that the link will come to Stratford. The moment that that was decided, however, the fear was that we would never hear anything again about the link between Stratford and King's Cross. That would be a disaster for the rest of the country. That must not be allowed to happen.

We must have this Bill as it is the only one before us. It is absurd that we have to be tied up in private Bill procedure in order to allow railway developments of the type that we are discussing tonight. If the Government want such a project, they should be able to make a strategic, infrastructural decision. They should not have to rely upon the private Bill procedure, because the issue is too important. The whole thing is anachronistic.

If the channel tunnel is ever to be a genuine national undertaking that brings benefit to all parts of the United Kingdom, and if that is to be achieved within our lifetime, it is important that the Bill goes ahead. I hope that the first step towards that will be taken tonight.

9.25 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I will be brief, but I must take issue with the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). A comparison between the north part of the Calais region and central London is ludicrous. If the hon. Gentleman had ever been there, he would know that the Calais region is like the surface of the moon. One could build not only a railway terminal there, but the fifth London airport and no one would notice. We are talking about a terminus in the heart of a great city and some proper consideration should be given to that.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Gale: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) suggested that, because this is the only Bill on the table, we should settle for it or we will not get anything. That is an equally ludicrous suggestion.

I listened with great care to the lengthy argument put forward by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I do not rebuke the hon. Gentleman for the length of his speech, as he is defending and promoting the interests of his constituents fiercely and properly. The environmental arguments that the hon. Gentleman has set out are also extremely valid. I not only listened to the hon. Gentleman's arguments tonight, but I have read the other speeches that he has made throughout the passage of the Bill. I studied his arguments at great length over the weekend and I have come to the conclusion that much of the hon. Gentleman's argument is extremely valid and needs a great deal of further consideration.

I shall not cover the ground already dealt with by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury; instead, I shall consider the credibility of the promoter of the Bill, British Rail. The House will recall that during the passage of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, British Rail stated that there was no need for a high-speed line. Apparently it was convenient for BR to say that, because, had there been such a high-speed line included in the Channel Tunnel Bill, it is possible that that Bill would have fallen.

Now we are told that BR must have a high-speed line. Those of us who serve Kent constituencies agree with that. I believe that a London terminus of the right kind must be established to provide the right links to the north and the rest of England. Above all, it must be built in the right place.

On Second Reading on 8 May 1989, at column 617, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) was asked why British Rail had changed its mind about the need for a high-speed rail link. He said simply: "Forecasts have been revised". Tonight we are entitled to ask how many more times those forecasts will be revised and in which direction.

It has already been suggested that if a terminus were built at Stratford East, it would have a major impact on the financial viability of the terminus at King's Cross. I want to know the answers to the questions. It is not good enough for my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who is the sponsor of the Bill, to come here without those answers. That has continually happened when other hon. Members have sought to move the carry-over motion.

The most recent edition of the Kent county council's "Railing Update" ran the headline

"KCC to help sort out shambles".

The first line of the article stated:

"Kent County Council has pledged to help sort out the shambles surrounding the International Rail Link."

The leader of the county council, Tony Hart, is reported as saying:

"at the moment it appears to be little more than a line on the map, and a pretty thick and crude one."

If that is true, further consideration needs to be given to precisely where the London terminus will be located. In an earlier debate, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) suggested that if the terminus were built at Stratford, East, it could save as much as £1 billion on the project. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will consider it in order if I state precisely what that £1 billion

[Mr. Gale]

could mean to those or us who live in the Network SouthEast region. We are continually being told by British Rail that how it spends its money depends on priorities. The priority for those of us who live along and use the north Kent line is that line itself, and the £1 billion saved on the project would go a devil of a long way to sorting out the line.

I have a piece of paper listing one traveller's journeys during the first fortnight of this month. Of the 20 trains travelled on from north-east Kent—Herne Bay, in my constituency to Cannon Street—two arrived on time, 17 were late and one was cancelled because no crew were available due to a clerical error in the rostering. That shows the standard of the management that we are being asked to endorse if we pass the Bill. I do not believe that the current management at British Rail is capable of building the project, although I believe that it needs building. We have a right to say that, if such a major project is to go ahead, we should not—as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said earlier—settle for whatever is on the table, but should ensure that it is the right project and that the correct amount of money and no more should be spent on it. The rest of the money that British Rail has available should be spent on projects that are desperately needed to provide jam today, not tomorrow, for the commuters who are paying British Rail for the services it offers today.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman has for some time been against the original fast rail link through Kent and south London, and we have learnt tonight that he is against the current project, apparently because he believes that all British Rail's money should be spent on saving his neck by improving the lousy commuter service that his constituents have had to tolerate for 13 years of Tory misrule—to use a well-known phrase from a couple of decades back. Which projects should British Rail propose and where will it find the money to pay for them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) will resist the temptation to depart from the Bill under discussion.

Mr. Gale: I certainly will, but I shall correct one error of fact in the statement of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. I have never opposed the fast link from Kent, which does not run through my constituency. Those of us who live in north-east Kent have always believed that there should be a fast link, and we have been perfectly happy for it to go through south London, to where our constituents who will benefit from the link wish to travel. I am on record as having said that on many occasions in the House—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East spent more time listening and less time intervening from a sedentary position, he might hear what Conservative Members have to say, some of which is not entirely contradictory to what he wants.

I want the link to be built and the priorities to be right. A couple of years ago, British Rail spent millions of pounds building a link between London and Stansted airport that currently carries virtually no passengers. I am not saying that that link is not necessary or will not be necessary at some time in the future, but the priority must be to serve the passengers who are paying now. I believe that the money should be spent now on the services used now, and we must ensure that the planning is right so that the terminus is built in the right place. If that place proves to be Stratford East, that is where the terminus should go. But it should not be built somewhere simply because a Bill is lying on the table. The arguments of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury carry much weight and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East would do well to give them slightly more attention.

9.38 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) referred to the issue of management and targeted his criticism at the management of British Rail. I am not in a position to defend British Rail, but when we analyse the problems with commuter services in the south-east and the problems that British Rail faces in general, we must remember that they are caused because the Government will not allow British Rail to introduce the schemes that it wants, including electrification of other lines, in order to improve services. The position with the Bill is similar.

One of the reasons why I pressed the Minister to give an assurance about the link between Stratford and King's Cross is that it is feared that money will not be available to build the link. Several hon. Members have said that £1·25 billion has to be found for the King's Cross development and that other resources must be found for other British Rail projects connected with the channel tunnel. When we examine cost, I remind the House that it is not 12 months since we heard a statement from the Dispatch Box that the Government had found £4·5 billion to prop them up on the poll tax. So money can be found when the Government feel that it is necessary for them to sustain their vote throughout the country.

If the Government are sincere about the Bill, they should not hesitate to give assurances to the House and the country that the money will be found to ensure that a link will be provided and that services will be available to the communities in the regions, and particularly the north, from the channel tunnel.

When the Secretary of State announced in August this year the route that would be followed by the high-speed link, it was a tremendous disappointment to the local authorities and consortiums in the north of England that the link would come from the east through Stratford to King's Cross. That decision created tremendous doubt about whether facilities will be made available to service the regions north of London. Such doubts exist in Yorkshire and Humberside, which I know best, and in other northern and western areas.

I do not apologise for raising the matter on more than one occasion in interventions and again in my own speech. We want assurances from the Government. I said earlier that the debate seemed to be developing into a north-south divide. I understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) made the comments that he did. The Bill affects many of his constituents. Other hon. Members intervened and I thought that the debate was developing along "them and us" or north-south lines. I hope that the decision taken tonight will be to the benefit of the whole nation.

In the north we consider that King's Cross is needed nationally. It is an important facility for international passenger services to the north of England and the other regions beyond London. I sometimes feel that north of

Watford does not matter in debates in the House. Several hon. Members from the north have stressed tonight, with all the determination that we can bring to bear, the need for the northern region to be considered in this development.

The Bill should be accepted by the House because King's Cross will be the key terminal linking the north of England with the channel tunnel. We would prefer, of course, a direct link from the towns and cities of the north straight through to the channel tunnel, but that cannot be achieved. The best alternative is the King's Cross terminal.

We plead with the House to allow the Bill to take its course and reach the statute book. It would allow international trains to run directly into the key main lines beyond London. We are pleased with the services from west Yorkshire and south Yorkshire which terminate at King's Cross. This Bill will directly link such services to the channel tunnel and on to Europe.

The development at King's Cross will provide an excellent interchange for passengers from the north and the regions beyond London. The north of England, the midlands, Scotland, Wales and Ireland will be served well by the facilities at the new interchange.

We want a fast link between the north and south of this country. If the construction at King's Cross goes ahead with the fast lines from the north meeting the high-speed link to the channel tunnel, that will be ideal.

Given a fair wind the development could go ahead with minimum delay. The powers allowing the construction are being dealt with already and, as I have said, King's Cross will provide excellent access to London.

I offer my wholehearted support to the desire of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury for accuratge environmental assessments. They must be correct down to the last detail, in the interests of those who will be affected and in the interests of the project. People need to be satisfied that the environmental assessments for King's Cross and the high-speed link are accurate.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman said that he suppports the wish of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for a good environmental assessment. If such an assessment demonstrates that the site is not suitable, will he still support his hon. Friend?

Mr. O'Brien: The environmental assessment will be submitted along with the planning application. It is up to the people considering the planning application to deliver a judgment on the assessment. I consider the hon. Gentleman's remarks a little premature. He may oppose this measure but he should not pre-empt the results of the environmental assessment. Environmental assessments are important and they should be truthful and comprehensive. I feel sure that we shall get such an assessment.

The Government must be pressed to accept the British Rail view that the link is needed within the next six or seven years. The Government's announcement suggested a possible date beyond 2000 and said that it could be delayed up to 2005. That is totally unsatisfactory. The Government must co-operate with British Rail and should give the programme full support because it is important to every region in the country.

Given the right resources and planning, the King's Cross project in association with Thameslink 2000 will improve rail links between Kent, Sussex and Hampshire and the north-east of England and will allow travellers from one region to visit the other with only a single change at King's Cross. The development will allow passengers from Yorkshire, Humberside, the north-east and Scotland to travel to the south-east and to Europe with one change at King's Cross. Because of its importance for passenger services and the economic development of the northern region, we ask the House to support the project.

9.46 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I support the motion and I bring to the House the support of the North-West Channel Tunnel Group, which consists of a vast range of north-west commercial interests, and of the North of England Regional Consortium, which consists of many local authorities from the north of England. We say that the proposed second international passenger terminal at King's Cross is essential to the development of the north-west of England. It avoids peripherality and is essential for major passenger contact with the mainland of Europe.

I agree with the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) that if the fast link goes through the east of Kent it should not finish at Stratford; it must come to King's Cross. Through services must be provided via King's Cross to the west coast main line to serve the north-west of England. In that way fast passenger links to the north-west will be available shortly after the tunnel is opened. We look forward to the arrival of trains from Europe which will stop at King's Cross and then travel to termini in the north-west at Manchester or Liverpool. Those trains will travel on to Glasgow and, we hope, beyond.

I strongly emphasise the importance of the scheme to people in the north-west. I have pressed for better freight links, which is another argument, but we must start with a reasonably fast passenger link to Europe. The rival proposals for Stratford are totally unacceptable. The first problem is that Stratford is totally dependent upon the construction of the fast link to the tunnel via the east coast and Kent. If that is not built, Stratford will be useless. In the short term, King's Cross is already there and the links to it exist so that, from the start of the operation of the tunnel, people from the north can go into Europe, stopping at King's Cross, changing trains without difficulty.

Stratford is also badly connected to the United Kingdom's railway geography, with inferior capability for through international trains to the north-west and other regions beyond London. It has no existing direct links to the tunnel and could not function until a high-speed rail link was built, and that could be as late as the next century. Stratford is a total non-starter.

Mr. Dobson: Is it not the case that the connections to the tunnel will be in existence long before the scheme before the House can be completed or, knowing the way British Rail manages to cock things up, probably before it starts digging any of the soil?

Mr. Hind: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. He must bear in mind that, for the north-west, the interim proposal of Waterloo is not acceptable either. The sooner that the terminal at King's Cross is built, the better for the

[Mr. Hind]

north-west. Even before the main fast link to the tunnel, via Stratford has been built, the proposals in the Bill will have been implemented.

The Stratford terminal serves London poorly. King's Cross is in a central position with easy access to the centre of London. People from Europe will want to come directly to the centre, so King's Cross would bring greater benefits from tourism.

I commend the Bill to the House. It will bring the north-west of England major advantages. We must have the proposals in it, so I hope that all my hon. Friends will support the motion.

9.52 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I support the carry-over motion, as does the midland main line consortium, which is made up of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire county councils and Sheffield city council. They believe, as I believe, that if the Bill goes ahead, it will give much stronger grounds for electrification. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and I tabled an amendment linking the motion to the electrification of the main line from St. Pancras to Sheffield.

My short contribution will centre on the spur link set out as work No. 5 of schedule 1, between the midland main line and the old Great Northern line, and on the importance of speedy electrification of that line.

The evidence from the consortium that supports the Bill is that electrification would meet the 8 per cent. return on investment requirement of British Rail immediately. Given the importance to the region of such a project, and the facts that 90 per cent. of businesses in the region use the line and that it would take seven years to electrify from the date of commitment, it is essential that this project is linked into the Bill.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his hint of a commitment to electrify the line within the next 10 years. I draw his attention to the fact that a private consortium, the Central Railway Group, is proposing to build a private line on the old great central railway from the channel tunnel up through Buckinghamshire to Leicester. If it can raise a vast amount of capital—£1·8 billion—and believes that it is worth while to do so, surely it is possible for British Rail to commit the £100 million that is needed to electrify the main line. I say to my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Member is trying to keep in order, but he must direct his remarks to the Bill and the revival motion.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The last thing that I want to do is stray out of order. May I draw your attention, however, to work No. 5, which is about

"a railway commencing in the London borough of Islington by a junction with the Great Northern Railway at a point immediately below the southern portal of the western bore of Copenhagen tunnel"?

That is the very point to which I am referring. If electrification is linked to the spur line, it will not be necessary for me to do what my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) had to do only recently, which was to get the chairman of British Rail to attend another terminus in London and to make quite a row in order for some action to be taken. I am beginning to wonder whether it will be necessary to get the chairman to come to St. Pancras before we can elicit the funds for the project. A few days after the action that was taken by my right hon. Friend, a magic wand was waved and somehow money was found to improve the Southend line.

Finally, I draw the attention of the House to the arguments that have been deployed against the reopening of the Snow Hill tunnel. That is the Thameslink line, which is a part of the Bill and which has been referred to this evening. British Rail argued long and hard that it was not possible to open it. When it was opened, British Rail argued that it was important because it would not be necessary to improve the lines around London. British Rail should consider again the arguments for electrification of the midland main line. If it goes ahead with the project, it will find that it has a reward for the investment that exceeds its wildest dreams.

9.57 pm

Mr. Waller: With the leave of the House, I wish to say a few words in reply.

I have listened carefully to the arguments that have been advanced both for and against the revival of the Bill. Despite the length of one or two of the contributions of Labour Members, I do not think that they matched the significance of other speeches. I have heard strong arguments from hon. Members on both sides of the House for continuing with the Bill, in the interests of Londoners and in the national interest. If we are talking about a rail infrastructure that is suitable for the next century, we must have in mind the sort of measure that is the subject of the debate. I am confident that the House will support the motion. I ask it to do so to enable the Bill to be revived in the form——

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waller: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I ask the House to support the motion.

9.59 pm

Mr. Dobson: I had not intended to contribute to the debate but the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who introduced the motion, was asked several questions during his introductory speech and he failed stoically to produce any answers. We wanted to know——

Mr. Waller *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill may notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That the Bill shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting

of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the last Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table.

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.

To be communicated to the Lords and their concurrence desired thereto.

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other enactment; and

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund. *—[Mr. David Hunt.]*

10 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I rise to draw to the attention of the House the considerable significant public expenditure consequences of the Bill. For a long time and in so many previous debates, it has been difficult to obtain information on that aspect from any source, but particularly from Government sources. The money resolution provides a good opportunity to explore in some detail what will be the financial consequences of allowing the Bill to proceed.

I welcome the public Bill in one narrow, specific respect. It at least makes an honest instrument of the last Bill. The private Bill that has been promoted for the last two to three years could not be considered private legislation when it came to the question of its financial consequences. It had significant public expenditure consequences, but because it was introduced as a private Bill, almost no one took responsibility to explain to the House in any detail, or with any certainty, its public expenditure consequences.

Given that the Government have adopted the Bill now before the House, and given that the name of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury appears on it, I had hoped that we would receive a detailed explanation of its public expenditure consequences. Earlier, I interrupted the Secretary of State for Wales in the hope that he would be able to provide the House with such an explanation. We heard only one perfunctory sentence at the end of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, to the effect that he would give more money to the development corporation—£22 million, making £130 million over three years. That is the sum total of the right hon. Gentleman's explanation of a Bill that has significant public expenditure consequences.

I do not believe that the House should let the money resolution go through without endeavouring to explore further the Bill's financial implications. It is even more astonishing that we should be asked to approve this money resolution, when one realises that the carry-over motion that has just been passed touched on the channel tunnel —which involves two major Bills that the Government said would have no public expenditure implications.

Whatever may be the merits or demerits of the channel tunnel, it represents a huge item of public infrastructure of international consequences. The Bill that made it possible forbade any public expenditure to arise from that project. The King's Cross Railways Bill, part of the debate on which I just heard by accident, also has attached to it Government statements to the effect that it will have no public expenditure consequences.

Yet a large sum of public money is to be devoted to a high-class private project comprising a marina incorporating high-class residential and commercial accommodation. Many of my hon. Friends could have an interesting discussion about the merits of the barrage if it were the

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

subject of a private Bill. It is anything but private, in that it will be wholly dependent upon public expenditure to make it work.

It is a curious fact that some of the driest support in terms of the people who trooped through the Lobby, and the Under-Secretary of State for Wales—who is not renowned for his "wet" views in the spectrum of the Conservative party—will also be supporting a Bill that will have public expenditure consequences of the kind and character that I seek to clarify. If nothing else, we should know the Bill's financial consequences before agreeing to the money resolution. We have not received such an explanation yet—certainly not from the Secretary of State this evening.

Apart from the money attached to the Bill, and the reference in the Bill to the money that will flow from it, we know of the broader public expenditure involved—what is known as the barrage-related public expenditure. We know, for example, that 1·5 miles of a road that is an intrinsic part of the scheme will cost more than £90 million. It will go down in history as one of the most expensive roads in Britain, but it is part and parcel of the Butetown link. It is not envy, surely, that prompts me to compare the cost with that of building the Conwy tunnel.

We have been given some amazing figures relating to jobs. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) must be the most gullible Member in the House; like the Under-Secretary of State, he trotted out the figures for what must have been propaganda reasons. I do not think that the Under-Secretary of State accepts the truth of those figures, but if the experts can actually forecast to a square metre—almost to a job—the consequences of investment in the scheme, the Government should immediately employ them in the Welsh Development Agency, the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board and the Welsh Office. They appear to be better at the job than the National Audit Office.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): As local authorities have discovered over the years, presenting precise job creation figures requires some care.

My hon. Friend has referred to the importance of the road. I have worked in the Butetown area through which the road passes. Butetown is one of the most deprived areas in Wales, by any criterion. Does my hon. Friend accept that the decision to make the road a cut and cover road, thus ensuring that the two halves of Butetown will be united rather than divided, is one of the most positive community decisions that could have been made, regardless of the cost?

Mr. Rowlands: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, but I feel that we should acquaint the House with the enormous expenditure consequences. The expenditure may indeed be justifiable, but many roads divide many communities, and many such developments may be environmentally sensitive. I do not think that expenditure of £60 million a mile has been involved before. I do not quarrel with my hon. Friend; I am merely explaining the physical cost of carrying out such an important piece of social engineering.

Mr. Michael: I accept what my hon. Friend has said. I think that we agree about the importance of such roads, whether they are in Cardiff, in the valleys or in rural communities. My point is that such road building, although it may have a positive result, is not relevant to or dependent on the development of the barrage. The calculations of the House and the Treasury lead to the inclusion of the money in the financial memorandum; in fact, it is not related to either the barrage or the developments that are dependent on it.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend continues to educate me on a host of issues. However, whatever the money relates to, and however it is accounted for, it adds up to £60 million a mile, which is a lot to spend on road building in any community. If expenditure involves the language of priorities, we must consider the consequences of building a road at that cost. We need a public expenditure remit. When the Bill is considered in Committee, we need to know the expenditure commitments.

What is the grand total of barrage-related expenditure? In earlier debates, the Cardiff bay barrage-related expenditure was agreed to be £547 million, the Welsh Office share being £335 million. That figure was agreed in February of this year. We have been told that this expenditure will create very many jobs. Earlier I made the point that the sooner we have these advisers, if they are so good, in the Welsh Office, the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board and elsewhere, the better.

I did not intend to deride WIDAB or Welsh Office estimates, but when selective financial assistance and investment grants are given it is almost impossible to attach the number of jobs created to such sums of money. The National Audit Office told us only what we already knew—that there is a great difference between job creation figures and investment. I accept that; it has been part and parcel of our lives for the last 20 or 30 years and more. I do not wish to rub noses in it, but a great deal of the National Audit Office's analysis is fairly superficial. I do not therefore rest my case on that basis. We ought not, however, to be gullible and accept figures down to the last square metre and the last office worker job that will be created. We should not accept them as conclusive proof that all sense of financial accountability must be abandoned.

I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us whether we are still talking about barrage-related development amounting to £547 million. Furthermore, will £335 million of the £547 million fall on the Welsh Office vote? When we last debated the matter, we were told that the Cardiff bay barrage costs amounted to £125·55 million. When the Bill was originally published, that figure was about £82 million. I accept that additional expenditure has been added to it as a result of arguments that have been put forward both in the House and elsewhere. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the figure is still £125·55 million? If so. how does that figure square with the financial effects listed in the Bill?

Three figures are referred to in the explanatory and financial memorandum: £113 million for the cost of constructing the barrage, £2·5 million for acquisition of land and rights, and £37 million for groundwater and water quality protective provisions. That amounts to a total of £152 million. Is that figure equivalent to the quoted figure of £125 million? I see that the Minister nods his head. In other words, since we last discussed the Bill, costs have increased by £25 million. When we debate the Bill in, say, July, will the figure have increased again? Should we consider merely inflation, or will additional

costs be incurred? What are we buying under the money resolution? We have witnessed fantastic increases under a Government who are supposed to be prudent. They do not want to spend a penny on the channel tunnel or on the King's Cross Railways Bill, yet they have happily agreed to a further £25 million being spent on the Bill.

The Secretary of State did not explain the financial consequences of the Bill. I am a good amateur historian —one needs to be with this Bill because it has a good historical pedigree. If I remember rightly—my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will correct me if I do not—the original net operating loss of the barrage was estimated to be about £400,000 a year. After all the yachtsmen had paid their fees and moored their boats, after houses had been built and after this wonderful scheme was operating, lo and behold there would be an operational loss of £400,000. I remember the debate vividly because my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth told me that that was nothing compared with how much we spent on maintaining parks in Cardiff.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend define "loss"?

Mr. Rowlands: The "Financial effects" section of the Bill states that

"the annual cost of operating the barrage . . . will be a net £1·6 million a year."

Mr. Michael: Does my hon. Friend accept that the word "loss" contains an element of criticism and that public expenditure on something that is worthwhile should not be defined as a loss?

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend accept the word "deficit"? If the word "loss" is loaded, I shall use "deficit".

We originally debated the £400,000 deficit that would be borne by the Cardiff Bay development corporation and then, presumably, by the poll tax payers of the city. We were then told that the operational deficit was £1·3 million. The "Financial effects" of the Bill mention a net deficit of £1·6 million. We have moved from a net deficit of £400,000 a year to one of £1·6 million a year. It is reasonable for me to say—this is not the politics of envy—that the deficit was originally estimated at £400,000 a year, then £1·3 million a year and now it is £1·6 million a year. If the bill were borne by the people of Cardiff, it would be up to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and others who represent Cardiff to come to terms with their electorates. It is not for me to quarrel with an operating deficit of £1·6 million if it is to be paid by the people of Cardiff. The Bill states:

"These costs will be borne by the Secretary of State."

The costs will be borne not by the people of Cardiff but by the Welsh Office, presumably through a grant to Cardiff Bay development corporation. The money will come from the Treasury.

The Bill does not say that the costs will be borne for one, five or 10 years there is an indefintie commitment. There are rumours that the period could be 20 years. We are asked to endorse in principle expenditure by the Welsh Office of £335 million out of £546 million, another £152 million through Cardiff Bay development corporation and a net operating deficit of £1·6 million for an indefinte period.

Leaving aside the Bill's principles, objectives and merits, Welsh Members, who often have arguments with the Welsh Office about various kinds of public expenditure, have a right to ask questions and to confirm figures, as I am trying to do.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will my hon. Friend help me? He gave a long list of the charges that will eventually be borne by the taxpayer or the Treasury, but he did not mention the other side of the equation—the income that will accrue to the development corporation and other interested organisations such as Associated British Ports.

. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) gave a long list of the benefits that will result from building the barrage as opposed to not building it. One benefit is the enhanced finance that will accrue to the interested parties —the development corporation and ABP, who are extensive landowners in the area. My hon. Friend is saying that, if there is a deficit, the costs will fall on the taxpayer. Let us suppose that there is a profit. What will happen to it? Will ABP pay anything towards the costs which my hon. Friend mentioned?

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important issue. In a previous debate, I asked whether repayments would be made to the Welsh Office if enormous profits were made. At the moment, I am interested in a narrower point to which the financial resolution binds us. Are we to accept a scheme leading to a £1·6 million deficit which will be borne by the Welsh Office year in, year out if the deficit continues as expected?

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) raised an important issue in relation to Associated British Ports. Am I right in saying that, when we were dealing with a private Bill, ABP could say, "As petitioners, we will do what we can to delay the Bill unless our requirements are met"? Therefore, if there is a benefit for Associated British Ports—and there is—the fault lies not with ABP for seeing the opportunities but with the private Bill system which has, in effect, held the city of Cardiff as well as the Welsh Office to ransom because the development could not proceed without the agreement of the petitioners at that time. It is one of the ironies that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is raising some important issues, but had we not had to go through the private Bill procedure but been able to deal straight away with the hybrid Bill that we are now debating, such issues would have been on the surface. Instead, they have been dealt with and decided during the course of the private Bill procedure.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend raises some profound questions, but I suspect that if I pursued them I might go beyond the financial resolution that we are now debating.

I am concerned merely to identify the public expenditure consequences of the Bill as we are being asked to agree to the financial resolution. I have drawn to the House's attention what I believe to be interesting and fascinating circumstances. They are not unique because there are precedents and I am sure that the Minister will have a stack of them. He had better, because I want chapter and verse. How many other schemes in Wales is the Welsh Office currently financing with an unlimited commitment on an operational deficit, year in and year out? I should love to know.

I know a great deal about and understand the capital expenditure grants that Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney

[Mr. Rowlands]

receives through the agency for its land clearance schemes. I understand the modest amounts that we receive under three-year urban aid schemes. There are often tens of thousands stretched over three years and they are accompanied by the strict notion that any costs, burdens and deficits of the society, community, organisation, community centre or swimming pool, or whatever, will at the end of that period be borne by the community's tax payers, not by the Welsh Office.

I want to ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary a specific question before we approve the resolution. Will he list the other schemes for which the Welsh Office has committed itself to such an operational deficit in expenditure every year? I should be grateful for that information. As I said, I have examples on my own patch. We understand capital expenditure extremely well and we know that it is funded from the Welsh Office. That involves a one-off, large-scale investment to transform the infrastructure of our society and our community.

I thought that this Government, more than any other, were never willing to commit themselves for any length of time to covering operational deficits. I thought that operational deficits were dirty words to them, whatever we think about them. I thought that they were dirty words according to the Government's philosophy, but the financial effects of the Bill, which many Conservatives have trooped in to support, would involve a £1·6 million operational deficit. The tab will be picked up not by the yachtsmen who moor their boats in the area or by the developers whose investments will increase, and not even by the people of Cardiff who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, keep their parks and recreation areas well, but by the taxpayers of Wales, by the Treasury and the Welsh Office.

How many more schemes can we introduce which will allow operational deficits to be carried indefinitely by the Secretary of State? That is an extremely serious and interesting consequence. Why should the Secretary of State bear the operational deficits of such a scheme? Why from the start did not the Government take the line that if we wanted to build a barrage to create the marina and the rest, and if the scheme was so good, the cost should be raised by the private sector? The public infrastructure of much of the docklands redevelopment should be a mixture of private and public investment. That is the equivalent of what Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney are doing with land reclamation schemes.

If we came along with such a fanciful scheme, expected large capital expenditure and said that the consequence would be a £1·6 million deficit every year, what reaction would we have got from a Tory Secretary of State? I am willing to be educated. If the Secretary of State will give us a list of equivalent schemes for which the Welsh Office is financing operational losses of that order for a period that is unknown, I am willing to decide whether we should endorse the expenditure required under the resolution. My questions are more than justifiable when we are asked to pass the money resolution.

10.30 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May I help my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) by giving one example of a scheme which will never run into profit, but which will be financed out of public funds? It is the London docklands light railway extension—*[Interruption.]* Let me finish. We were told by the Secretary of State that it would be financed by the Treasury. I have spent the past few painful months chairing the Committee on the London Docklands Railway (Lewisham etc.) Bill. The scheme is going forward and it will not, in the foreseeable future, make a profit.

I am not as surprised by the way in which the Thatcherite philosophy seems to be expounded by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney as I am by the more enlightened philosophy coming through, which says that one does not have to make a profit on each scheme. To talk about deficits or profits on a scheme such as the Cardiff bay barrage is like asking people to make a profit on the library service, on opera or on art. We do not believe that society should be organised with profit as the prime virtue. That was the grave error of the past 12 dark years of Thatcherism. I am surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney does not accept that some schemes are so important and of such universal benefit—in this case, for the inhabitants of Cardiff and of Wales generally—that they are worth considering as eligible for public money at some point.

Mr. Rowlands: I accept my hon. Friend's interesting observations, but I will make two points. First, the Bill is introduced by the Government. Secondly, even my hon. Friend will agree that we must make some comparison between the marina scheme being suggested, and essential developments for libraries and for the culture of our whole community. There is a great deal of difference between the two.

Mr. Flynn: I remind my hon. Friend that there is celebration in heaven over one sinner doing penance. The Government's act of penitence on the scheme is to be welcomed.

I can speak with some knowledge of Cardiff because I was born there and I lived in the area for the first 30 years of my life. Some people from outside the area have a false idea of it and of the people who will benefit from the scheme. We have heard talk of the boat owners and the yuppies moving in. There was an area close to where I lived in Cardiff called Madras street and Thomas street which was destroyed in a slum clearance programme. We did not regard them as slums; we thought that it was a vibrant, robust and tough community full of strong personalities. When the area was knocked down, the people were decanted to a block of flats called Channel View at the end of Channel View road. Most of them have stayed there and have not come back to the new and much improved homes that have been built. Those people are definitely not yuppies. They are very much part of Cardiff because they have lived there and have their roots deep in Cardiff, and are part of the tough community in that town.

The rest of the people who will benefit from the barrage have a magnificent view of the great surging tide that comes in—the second highest tide in Europe—which is a moving cliff of water. It offers great drama and excitement. However, for 18 hours a day all that is provided is an unattractive mudscape. The popular view is that people would prefer to live by an area of reflective water. People find that an attractive sight, as is proved in Baltimore and throughout the world.

If one analyses how the money will be spent, one discovers that just one fifth of it will be spent on the barrage. I note with great pleasure that £95 million will be spent on environmental improvements, because generations of Cardiffians have treated the area in a disgraceful manner. I used to work at the Esso refinery at Victoria wharf and for many years I worked at steelworks in the Cardiff docks. I used to trudge across the area every morning and it was a slum. It was a mixture of old factories and derelict housing. Cardiff had turned its back on the area and it was despised and shunned. For many years its residents had a poor deal. We now have a chance to rejuvenate the area and to create a vast, attractive lake.

People must not be negative about the changes. I welcome the large amount of money that will be spent on water treatment. When I was a boy, the Taff, at the height of summer when there was a low flow down river, consisted of nothing but coal slurry and sewage. The Taff was virtually an open sewer; it was a disgrace. Since then, however, it has been cleaned up enormously. One could not impound the water as it is now—it must be subjected to further improvements. We now have sophisticated means of cleaning up water, particularly if it is impounded. One can use different methods, for example, phosphate stripping, to clean, manage and maintain the water.

A lake in Austria recently won an international award. A few years ago people would not swim in it because of the quality of the water. That water, after expensive treatment, is now fit to drink straight from the lake. We can ensure that the water in the Cardiff bay, which will be at the heart of the system, will be pure.

Mention has been made of the Butetown link road to Grangetown. That essential road should have been built years ago. It will cross difficult terrain and I am delighted that the Government are to use public money on its construction, as they have on other imaginative schemes in Wales.

I was sorry to note in the Second Reading debate some of the comments of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), although he did admit that they were based on the experience of his grandfather, who had lived in Cardiff some years ago. The hon. Gentleman said that he was in favour of the Bill in principle, although I note that he did not say that the entire Liberal party was in favour. However, I have heard murmurs of approval from the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells).

The Bill is important not just to Cardiff, but to Wales. Cardiff is our capital city and the Bill will transform an area that has long been derelict. The centre of the docks has already been largely metamorphosised, but there is a long way to go. The money for the Bill represents a good investment for Cardiff and Wales.

10.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): In the six minutes left, I shall try to answer some of the points that have been raised in this interesting money resolution debate.

The money resolution would authorise the payment, out of money provided by Parliament, of the expenses of the Secretary of State which would arise as a consequence of the Bill, if enacted. It covers both expenses arising directly from the provisions of the Bill and those arising out of any other enactments attributed to the Bill.

The costs covered by the resolution therefore include the costs of constructing the works set out in schedule 1 to the Bill, at £113 million; the costs of acquiring land for the project under part II of the Bill and compensating land owners affected by the project, at £2·5 million; the costs of carrying out the surveys of buildings, the remedial work by the development corporation and the payment of compensation in respect of the groundwater protection scheme, at £37 million; and the cost of operating the barrage and managing the inland bay and lagoon at £1·6 million.

Schedules 2 and 6 allow the Secretary of State to recover from the development corporation costs incurred in relation to the survey or examination of tidal works or sites on which it is proposed to execute tidal works, and expenditure incurred in the repair or removal of the tidal structure where the development corporation has failed to comply with the notice requiring it to carry out such repairs or removals. As those matters are related to navigation, they will be for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

It will be helpful if I explain how those figures relate to those that arose during earlier debates. The detailed letter that I sent to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on 13 December 1990 set out fully the earlier figures, and copies of that letter were placed in the Library. The total cost of the construction, land acquisition and protection provisions is £152·5 million. The equivalent figure in my letter to the hon. Gentleman was £125·55 million. The main reason for the difference is an allowance for inflation and design changes in the barrage and lagoon. The figure of £152·5 million is the expenditure that arises directly from the Bill's provisions; it is what Parliament would be approving in passing the Bill.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked several questions, the first of which related to financial effects and inflation. The money resolution states:

> "(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other enactment; and
>
> "(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund."

It allows for the figures to increase as the costs increase due to inflation or during the passage of the Bill, perhaps in the Select Committee hearing. No Government who are willing to listen to what is said by the Select Committee and Mr. Roy Stoner and to take account of other factors that affect the Bill as it passes through the House can ignore that part of the resolution.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the sum of £547·29 million, which is the total figure for the redevelopment strategy at mid 1989-90 prices, based on the Cardiff bay barrage planning update and economic appraisal statement made in January 1990. It includes £125·5 million for the barrage, £148 million for infrastructure site preparation, £152 million for the improved access, £95·89 million for environmental improvements and £25 million for the people draw facilities—entertainment and leisure facilities that draw people into the district. Of that money, £335 million is the public sector cost to the local authorities and the Cardiff Bay development corporation, and £237 million of that will come from the development

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

corporation. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman can see that considerable sums are being provided by the Government towards the provisions of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman said that he was worried about the £1·6 million operating cost. That must be seen in context of the total sum that the Government and private industry are providing towards the redevelopment of the Cardiff bay district. The ratio of private to public money spent on the scheme will be 1:7. The total value is between £1·5 billion and £2 billion and the project will provide 25,000 jobs.

The hon. Gentlemen spent a considerable portion of his speech on the £1·6 million that he alleged would be the deficit on the running costs of Cardiff bay. He should remember what the £1·6 million involves. That figure is currently in the Bill, but we are looking to the corporation to carry out a number of activities that will help to recoup part of that sum. The net operating costs of the inland lake will be met by the development corporation during its lifetime, as will maintenance and capital replacement costs.

However, the corporation is considering several options to provide revenue to cover the operating costs on a longer-term basis. They include, first, levelling charges on residential and non-residential property in the bay area; secondly, placing property owned by the corporation into a managed portfolio designed to provide an annual lease or rent income; thirdly, the transfer of a cash endowment from the corporation into a managed fund designed to provide the necessary annual income and capital growth; and lastly, the possibility of creating a trust fund into which assets and capital growth income can be transferred from the corporation and which will provide an annual income. That last option is currently being discussed with the corporation.

So there is a clear financial memorandum set out in the Bill. We have £547 million total expenditure on the redevelopment strategy. We have the £335 million which will come from public funds, whether from the Cardiff Bay development corporation or local authorities and the £1·6 million towards the cost of operating the inland lake. Those figures should reassure the House, and I ask the House to accept the money resolution.

It being a quarter to Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other enactment; and

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.

Library Charges

10.45 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): I beg to move,

That the draft Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991, which were laid before the House on 22nd July, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

There have been many changes in libraries since the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This debate, to which I have been looking forward with keen anticipation, is the result of some of the changes and of the need constantly to improve services. It is a debate not about a good service or a bad service but about how to make a good service even better.

By removing minor anomalies, the regulations will help to give library authorities greater flexibility, opportunity and possibility to develop new services. It will allow them the freedom to charge for more services, without affecting the basic, free traditional service. In effect, the regulations will help to improve the service to the reader and allow authorities to make better use of their resources.

Let me give the House a bit of history. Section 8(1) of the 1964 Act prohibits library authorities in England and Wales from charging anyone other than another library authority for library facilities, except as provided for by that section. Section 154 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 amends section 8 of the 1964 Act and empowers the Lord President of the Council and the Secretary of State for Wales to specify in regulations which library facilities provided by library authorities may be charged for. The regulations will replace the limited charging powers that library authorities presently have, which are set out in section 8(2) to section 8(5) of the 1964 Act.

Before drawing up the regulations, we invited library authorities to let us know which facilities they charged for or might wish to charge for in future. The results showed that services are already provided on library premises which go beyond those which could strictly be defined as library facilities. These include specialised information services, graphic design services, desk-top publishing facilities and translation services.

Those services fall outside the scope of the prohibition in section 8(1) of the 1964 Act. Thus the regulations, which give exceptions from that prohibition, do not deal with them. That is not to say that those services cannot continue to be provided on library premises. But they are services provided by local authorities under other powers and not as library authorities.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am interested in the line of the Minister's thoughts. He seems to be about to announce that he intends to give freedom to library authorities to decide the way in which they operate. If the Minister does not mind my saying so, I seem to have heard that before somewhere. Will he make any assumptions as a result of the regulations about how library authorities can generate income when he considers the financial support that they need?

Mr. Renton: I suppose that I must thank the hon. Gentleman for referring to my argument as a line of thought, but it is not a line of thought: it is a textual explanation of the regulations. I do not intend to make any assumptions about the amount of additional income local authorities may raise from these regulations, because it is at their discretion to decide whether to use these powers. These are merely enabling regulations.

Mr. Michael: Even if the Minister does not make such assumptions, will not Ministers responsible for local government finance make assumptions about the income that can be generated? Will he assure us that his colleagues in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office will not make assumptions and will leave these matters to be decided freely by local authorities?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is making a Welsh mountain out of a small molehill. When we looked into this matter, we found that about 80 per cent. of the library authorities that we consulted said that they used the income that they generated from these charges to add to their services in other areas. The money is therefore beneficial to them.

The regulations have been drawn up to cover only those library facilities made available by the library authorities in the course of carrying out their functions under section 7 of the 1964 Act. In February 1988 my office published the Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service: Four Subjects for Debate", which, among other things, proposed to remove anomalies and inconsistencies in library authorities' present powers to charge.

This was followed by a six-month public consultation period. Similarly, the draft regulations were sent out for comment in September 1990 to representatives of those responsible for or with an interest in the administration and operation of the public library service in England and Wales. The final draft was prepared after all the views expressed during the three-month consultation period had been fully considered.

It was as a result of this consultative process that I decided, for example, to remove the upper limit of £1·50 on reservation charges.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Minister says that the changes in the final draft were made after the full period of consultation. Did any of the library authorities—or the Library Association, or the Library Campaign—consulted during that period ask him to remove the £1·50 charge?

Mr. Renton: I know that the Library Association issued some notes—no doubt the hon. Gentleman will draw on them during his speech—in which it opposed the removal of the limit. But most of the chief librarians whom we consulted, through their association known as FOLACL —the Federation of Local Authority Chief Librarians—felt strongly that authorities should be able too exercise discretion with reservation charges, just as they do for other charges. They therefore favour the abolition of the limit——

Mr. Fisher: Would the right hon. Gentleman care to name the chief librarians in question, and the authorities that they represent? What he has said will cause great surprise in the library world. If the right hon. Gentleman claims that this view was taken, he should name the people who took it.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the hon. Gentleman has not done his homework properly. A majority of chief librarians, through their association FOLACL, thought that the maximum charge should not remain.

[Mr. Renton]

I shall in a moment specify the facilities for which library authorities will be empowered to charge, but first I want to remind the House of an important safeguard for free access to the library service which we have built into the provisions of the 1964 Act, as substituted by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

We have excluded from the scope of the enabling power two main elements which are generally regarded as traditional free public library services: the borrowing by any person living, working or studying full time in the area of an English or Welsh library authority of books, journals and pamphlets available in written form within a library or mobile library of that authority; and the use for reference and consultation purposes of all such materials and microform materials, or any catalogue of the authority's own holdings by any person within library premises of that authority.

This statutory safeguard, which is repeated in the draft regulations, demonstrates our commitment to maintaining the essential, free, traditional public library service. The regulations will replace the limited charging powers presently held by library authorities. They will preserve the existing powers to charge contained in the Act, such as for notification of the availability of a reserved item, for late return of borrowed material and for supplying book catalogues or indexes which become the property of the persons to whom they are supplied.

The regulations will also correct certain anomalies in the existing legislation. Some existing powers are inconsistent or unhelpfully limited. An authority may charge a user for keeping a book or other library material longer than the allowed period, but not for any damage that he has caused to the item. An authority may charge a user the cost of notifying him that the book or other article is available for borrowing, but not the administrative costs of reserving material. It can charge for telling the customer that the item is ready to be borrowed, but not that it is unobtainable or may be consulted only in the reference library. These anomalies are corrected in the regulations.

Finally, the regulations will introduce new charging powers. They will give library authorities power to charge for assistance given by library staff, for example, in conducting research for a user among a library's materials. Many authorities are now asked by individuals and organisations to carry out lengthy research, and it seems right that they should pay for that work. The regulations do not allow a library authority to charge for staff time involved in straightforward inquiries concerned with the provision of the traditional library service, such as where to find a book or a simple reference request.

In addition, the regulations empower charging for assistance or instruction in the use of computers. Since the 1964 Act, computers have played an increasing role in the library service. Libraries use computers to store their catalogues and indexes and process information that is needed for good housekeeping, such as reserving material, recording loans and due dates. The regulations prevent a charge from being made where the computer is required to consult an authority's own catalogues or indexes.

The current section 8 of the 1964 Act allows a library authority to sell only catalogues and indexes. The regulations place no such restrictions on library authorities and they can sell material which they have researched, collated, produced or copied themselves. The regulations also clarify the power to charge for the borrowing of certain non-print materials and the provision of library services off library premises, for example, to old people's homes and to hospitals.

I repeat that all the powers to charge will, as at present, be discretionary. It will be for each library authority to decide whether to charge for any library facility for which charging is authorised by the regulations. When they do decide to charge, library authorities will be able to decide what they charge and the concessions that they give, taking into account local needs and circumstances. For example, some local authorities may decide not to charge for talking books for those whose sight is impaired, or they may exempt children and the elderly from reservation charges. Such matters will be for local authorities to decide. The draft regulations will provide that any charges which are to be imposed must be displayed on library premises.

There is no question of the regulations heralding the privatisation of the public library service. This is not so. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, library authorities have a duty to provide public library services, and they will continue to have a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. I intend to monitor charging levels. All library authorities will be contacted in two years' time so that we can assess the situation. The intention is to bring section 154 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and these regulations into force on 1 January 1992.

We recognise the importance and popularity of the public library service. It is valued by all sectors of the community, and these regulations reflect the Government's determination to provide authorities with opportunities to develop and improve their library and information services as they deem fit. They are just one of a series of steps that we have taken to help library authorities. Last year, we published a manual on assessing performance in libraries, and we shall shortly be publishing another on public library objectives. We have continued and improved the public library development incentive scheme, and the first awards in the new scheme were announced two weeks ago. We shall thus continue to take steps to make the library service effective, modern and good value for money. The regulations will help in this process, and I commend them to the House.

11 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): We welcome the regulations. The Minister is right to say that clarification was needed to establish precisely the charging powers of public library authorities and that the anomalies and obscurities in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to be tidied up. In his period of consultation, both on the Green Paper and on these regulations, he will have heard that from librarians, and the Library Association made it clear in its meeting with him in February. They were all glad that, when the Minister met the association, some of the changes to the draft regulations that it suggested—for example, the dropping of charging for the librarians' time—were agreed to. The Minister was right to take its advice and drop that proposal.

Unfortunately, not all the points that professional librarians made to the Minister in consultations have resulted in changes. In spite of what he said, the Library Association feels that the changes in the regulations may

throw up as many obscurities and uncertainties as the provisions of section 8 of the 1964 Act. As the Minister admitted, he made one significant alteration from the draft regulations against the advice of the Library Association and of most librarians. He gave us the source when he spoke of the majority of chief librarians in their professional association, but he needs to explain that rather more.

Not many chief librarians or librarians will find it easy to believe that the majority of those advising the Minister said that the maximum charge should be abandoned. I suspect that all the correspondence that he has had, like all the correspondence that I have had, says the opposite—that this is an unhelpful and rather dangerous thing to do, and that the draft regulations were better when there was a clear maximum charge.

The change that the Minister made is a significant one. He presented it in a reasonable light, saying that it was purely discretionary and that librarians would have freedom to charge. The House will recognise that he is being disingenuous when he presents it in that light. Librarians will be free to charge, but they will be under pressure from the Minister. If they complain about lack of financing and about difficulties, he will have the perfect answer. He will say, "I have given you these powers to increase charges. Do not come to me complaining that you are underfinanced—you have the remedy in your hands. The regulations that I put before Parliament were liberal; they gave you the freedom to solve your own problems. Go away and charge. Don't come wittering to me about not having enough money. You have the remedy in your own hands."

The "freedom" that the Minister has given to library authorities is not entirely what it may seem. He knows well, especially after the events of the past couple of weeks, that many library authorities are short of money. I suspect that he will not hesitate after 1 January 1992 to advise them they should be raising charges to solve their difficulties.

The Minister said in answer to a parliamentary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that the Library Association had said that there was no problem with money and that there was a choice. He will recall that the association's chief executive, George Cunningham, wrote the next day as follows:

"I must, with respect, make it emphatically clear that the Library Association has said nothing of the kind that could be interpreted in that sense. On the contrary, as you know from exchanges with our President and otherwise, the Association has stressed the need for more resources to be made available for public libraries. That was the very message that we conveyed to you at our meeting in February, and it has been the gist of many statements made by our President since."

The Minister accepted that he had made a mistake. He answered a question of mine by saying:

"I am glad to have the opportunity of correcting a slip of the tongue"—

we all know that such mistakes are easy to make—

"when I referred to the Library Association. I intended to quote the report 'Libraries' Choice', which said that the key issue was choice rather than money."

The Minister has admitted his mistake. I suppose that it is easy to confuse a professional association with a magazine. The House may find, however, that it is a rather surreal difficulty of the Minister's not being able to tell the difference between a professional body and a journal. Leaving that aside, it is not clear from the Minister's reply whether in his apology or his answer to me he admitted that it was not the Library Association that made the remark or whether he admitted that money is an acute concern of library authorities. I am sure that he will take the opportunity to say that he understands that library authorities throughout the country have grave money difficulties.

The right hon. Gentleman will have seen the Library Association's survey of April when it examined 78 library authorities, 70 per cent. of which stated that cuts had been made. It is those authorities that will be coming to him and complaining about the financial circumstances that the Government have placed on local authorities, which has led to the cuts.

I suspect that the Minister will be quoting the regulations to the library authorities. In effect, he will say, "Go away and increase your charges." So when Berkshire comes to him as a shire county and says, "We have had to cut £287,000 from our library authority this year", the Minister will say, "Go away and raise charges." When Warwickshire says that it has had to cut——

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Would he preclude charging within the fairly limited range of possibilities that is available within the regulations? Would he restrict the amount to be charged, and if so to what level? If not, will he say precisely what he is complaining about? It appears that he is worried that there will be excessive charges. Is he saying, however, that charges should be possible, and if so to what extent?

Mr. Fisher: I think that I have made it clear to the House, including the hon. Gentleman, if he has been following my argument, that the Opposition believe that the Minister would have been well advised to take the advice of the Library Association and to adhere to the draft regulations, which provided a maximum limit of £1·50. Library authorities would not then have had to go to the maximum, but they would have known the maximum sum that could be charged. Instead, by removing the maximum charge, the Minister has opened the way for much higher charges. When library authorities, such as Berkshire, that have been compelled to make cuts complain to the Minister, he will tell them, "The answer is in your hands." Warwickshire, which cut 12 per cent. of its book fund, may receive exactly the same answer from the Minister.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I was grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks about the scale of charges. He spoke also of the huge cuts forced on library authorities throughout the United Kingdom. Can he say what those cuts in library services mean in real terms? What kind of books are being cut from the curriculum?

Mr. Fisher: The kind of books that will not be bought this year will vary from authority to authority. Berkshire's cuts include a 14 per cent. opening reduction in opening hours—so libraries will be open for shorter hours. Warwickshire's cut of 12 per cent. of its book fund means that it will not provide any national newspapers in its libraries, and will reduce the number of periodicals. When Somerset had to cut £155,000 from its book fund, seven further libraries had to close an additional half-day a

[Mr. Fisher]

week. Also cut will be the range of books offered—whether to children or young people, or those who have sight problems.

Not just the three shire counties that I cited will be affected. The Library Association survey showed that 70 per cent. of the 78 authorities that replied are making cuts this year. They include Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and metropolitan districts such as Calderdale, Dudley, Kirklees, Oldham, South Tyneside, Wolverhampton and Walsall. There are present in the Chamber hon. Members whose own authorities have made cuts—and if they visit the libraries in their constituencies, they will come to know what those cuts mean on the shelves.

Mr. Meale: I asked that question of my hon. Friend because I have been contacted by many librarians in the east midlands area, who are fearful that the cuts will affect the provision of children's books and the provision and usage of services to children. I agree with my hon. Friend that such cuts can only lead to fewer services being offered to a group that is most in need.

Mr. Fisher: Nevertheless, the Minister will be quite within his rights to say to such authorities, "In the light of the regulations, you have the answer. You can do something about it. Raise charges. You make a lot of reservations—why not reinforce your book fund by making a profit on them and notifications. That way, you could solve at least some of your problems."

What is behind the Minister's thinking? I am glad that the right hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), the former Minister for the Arts, is present. As I understood the right hon. Gentleman's speeches and everything that he said about his Green Paper, he would not have abolished the maximum. He saw the need for a maximum charge to prevent exactly the circumstances that I described. I recall that he spoke about his Green Paper a great deal throughout the country, and always stressed the importance of the maximum charge, which was left in the regulations that the present Minister inherited. It was not on advice from his predecessors that the current Minister for the Arts made this change—and, in my view, he was not given such advice by professional librarians, such as those who belong to the Library Association, and certainly not by the Library Campaign—though the Minister is saying that some chief librarians advised him to remove the charge.

Mr. Renton: I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman attributes more Machiavellian spirit to me than to my predecessor, my very old right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce). However, the hon. Gentleman forgets two things. There are no maximum charges at present. There is none in the present situation. All that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham suggested was that there might be a maximum charge of £1·50 only in respect of reservations. He never suggested that there should be charges for all the things for which we are now introducing, or clarifying, the right to charge. I was strongly advised by FOLACL—the Federation of Local Authority Chief Librarians—the other professional organisation, which is in dispute with the Library Association on this issue, that a maximum was not a good idea. I feared that an established maximum of £1·50 would become a minimum, or a norm. I felt that the local authorities should reach their own conclusions on the appropriate figure to charge for reservations. Flattered as I am to be described as Machiavellian, what the hon. Gentleman has said is rather far from the facts.

Mr. Fisher: I do not know whether that was a slip of the tongue, or whether the Minister is becoming confused, but I do not see how a maximum can become a minimum. I do not think that the Minister meant that. He seems to need some education in basic semantics. It could be a norm, as he suggested; but, by definition, it cannot be a minimum.

In his draft regulations, the Minister's predecessor referred only to reservations, but in England alone there are nearly 7 million reservations a year. If income is increased from the present low levels, there will be considerable potential for an increase in library authorities' income. The Minister says that, to date, there have been no maximum——

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Maxima.

Mr. Fisher: I am grateful to the hon. and—classically, at least—learned Gentleman.

The reason why there has been no need for a maximum reservation charge in the past is that, until the present Government came along, library authorities were well funded. Our library system was the envy of the world, but, following the cuts that were carried out throughout the 1980s and are still being made, the pressure on library authorities to seek income generation has increased enormously. The Minister and his predecessors have been telling them, in various documents and speeches, to do that and thus to help themselves.

The Minister says that he is flattered by being seen as Machiavellian. His motive is not entirely clear. Is it a matter of principle? Does he believe, like one of his predecessors, Lord Gowrie, that people value things more if they are charged for them? In a not very distinguished speech that Lord Gowrie once made in Ealing, he said that library users would appreciate services more if they had to pay. I do not think, however, that this Minister believes in that principle.

Is it pragmatism? Presumably the Minister did his homework and worked out how many reservations were being made and what income was being generated. A survey carried out last year gave him some idea of the mean income from reservations and he worked out what increased charges might mean for the library authorities. If his reason for abolishing the maximum was the financial benefit for library authorities that he envisaged, he should tell the House about it.

Anticipating our lines of argument, the Minister has tried to deflect comment on what I suspect lies behind the Government's proposals: the changes introduced by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and the fact that the proposals are part of a process to privatise all or part of public library services. He knows that the Secretary of State for the Environment has added libraries to the list of services that will be considered for compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the matter that is before the House.

Mr. Fisher: I am trying to establish why there is to be this very significant change. It is important for the House

to understand the motive. I suspect that the motive, in conjunction with increased competitive tendering, is to move towards privatising the public library service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may be in the hon. Gentleman's mind, but I am afraid that for him to address these matters does not come within the Standing Orders.

Mr. Meale *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address himself to what is in the motion before the House.

Mr. Meale: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that my hon. Friend is perfectly correct, because he is replying——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot rise on a point of order and start challenging my ruling.

Mr. Meale: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is no point of order. The hon. Gentleman must not seek to debate my ruling with me. I very much hope that he is going to resume his seat.

Mr. Fisher: If I was travelling a little wide, I shall come back within the scope of the regulations. In that the regulations provide the potential for the generation of income, they are related to other Government moves on competitive tendering that will also bring income to the local authorities. All I am doing is responding to what was said by the Minister, who referred to privatisation. I believe that he was correct to raise it as a spectre, but that he was wrong to dismiss it so lightly. I suspect that he did so only because he was embarrassed about it. He knows the dangers of competitive tendering for the public library service. If he has listened to librarians, he probably knows very well that there are no private companies. He told the Library Campaign that he believed that W. H. Smith could probably move in and offer services. I think he knows——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has totally disregarded the advice that I offered to him. I very much hope that he will observe what I said.

Mr. Fisher: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was replying to the point the Minister made. When he referred to privatisation he was not ruled out of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have no recollection of the Minister referring to privatisation. Had I been aware of it I should have ruled him out of order. I very much hope that we can stick to the matter that is before the House.

Mr. Fisher: Of course I accept your ruling, but when the record is consulted it will show that the Minister referred to privatisation. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) shakes his head, but the Minister must acknowledge that he raised the question of privatisation.

Mr. Renton: It might help if again I put on record what I said. There is no question that the regulations herald the privatisation of the public library service. That is not so. I am delighted to repeat it.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister did raise the question, but sought to deflect it. I believe that he was a little hasty in doing so. That is a shadow which I suspect is worrying librarians and falling over the public library service.

An even more significant problem is the fact that the Minister then referred to what is still free in the public library service. He referred to books and to the use of information material. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will take the opportunity to emphasise that, contrary to much of the tone of the Green Paper and contrary to the tone of what the Minister said this evening, the Government recognise that the public library service is not just a book loan service but is a book and information service. The information side of the public library service is every bit as important as book loans. The Minister referred to the free loan of books and also said that the use of information will be free.

The draft regulations make it clear that charges can be made for research, for collating and for supplying catalogues and library material. The Minister should clear up exactly what is meant by "collating" and "computer", because that is not clear. The regulations mention "apparatus", which is not clearly defined but which will have to be charged for in future.

There are plenty of issues that the Minister should clear up in his circular. In resolving some difficulties, regulation 3(2) throws the net very wide and includes the use of cubicles, research and instruction, which at present are free. I hope that the Minister will say that he hopes that library authorities will continue to supply such services free. Despite the fact that he has introduced regulations giving them the power to charge for those services, I hope that he will say that he believes that it is good practice to provide instruction in the use of equipment free. Once charges for instruction and for using a cubicle are made, the free public library service will disappear.

If a person goes into a small branch library to borrow a book for studying which perhaps has a BBC video accompanying it but the library has neither the book nor the video, the Minister knows very well that that person will be charged for getting the book and video, for reserving them, for being shown how to work the video if he is not used to operating it and perhaps for a cubicle in which to look at the film. Those charges are specified in regulation 3(2). Somebody who asks a branch library for something simple such as a book and video to do studying may be charged for four, five or six different items. The Minister should recognise that that is not unlikely and should say whether that is his intention.

There is a curious omission from charging—activities in libraries. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that they are not covered by the regulations and that they should be provided free. Readings to children, poetry readings, play sessions in holidays, discussions and writers in residences are without the scope of the regulations. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that those imaginative and good services, which the best public libraries offer, are not to be charged for because they are without the regulations and that that is what the Government intend.

The Government's record on public libraries in the past few years has been nothing short of appalling. Library authorities—I have quoted as many Tory-controlled authorities as Labour authorities—are having to cut their book funds and their opening hours. The Minister is giving himself an out. He is telling them, "Increase your charges.

[Mr. Fisher]

I have removed the maximum. You can now increase your income and solve your problems." That is the reality. I suspect that that is the first move in competitive tendering for more areas of the public library service. The hon. Member for Dulwich shakes his head, but competitive tendering is privatising part of the library service. The Secretary of State for the Environment has said that library services will be suitable for competitive tendering.

Whole parts of the public library service will be privatised. Those services that are not—as covered by the regulations—will be charged for, not up to a maximum amount but to the extent sought by a library authority. A library authority that is pressed will probably have to consider dramatically increasing the prices charged for reserving books and so on to meet its obligations to provide services to the elderly, the disabled and people with poor sight.

The Government's policies cut the public library service. Under the guise of giving freedom to increase charges, the Government are forcing library authorities to increase charges. That is to the Government's discredit. They have one opportunity left: I hope that the Minister will issue a circular interpreting the regulations. I hope that he will make clear the meaning of such definitions as "computer", "collating" and "notifying" and clear up the issue of library activities. The right hon. Gentleman will not be able to clear up the mess that the Government have made of the public library service over the past 12 years. The sooner the Conservatives are out of office, the better.

11.31 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am always happy to work myself up into a great cultural stew, given half the chance. I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend the Minister, hoping that he would give me a chance. I am afraid that I could not find anything objectionable in his speech or in the regulations. Being a fair-minded person and still hoping that I had a chance to get a cultural stew going, I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), but he did not give me a chance either. I am a little stuck. All that I can do is to agree with my hon. Friend the Minister about the regulations and add some comments.

It is a little coy of us not to be frank. We are talking about books versus videos. It is evasive nonsense to talk about the two together. There is a great problem in terms of people reading books; there is no problem about getting people to look at videos. The problem is not in the library service but in the schools. People are not taught to read books. Only now are we confronting the reality of what goes on in our primary schools, which cannot even teach people to read.

The animadversions of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central on books and libraries smack a little of romantic cultural trash. The real problem is in the schools. If we get matters right there, people will make far greater use of the extraordinary facilities available in our libraries. I looked at computer print-outs of what people borrowed from our libraries and what is in the libraries. It was a disappointing study.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My hon. Friend spoke about the standard of teaching reading in primary schools. Does he agree that the main problem is not so much in the schools as in the teacher training colleges? Will my hon. Friend comment on that?

Mr. Walden: I would, but you would jump on me like a ton of bricks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I went one step further down that road. You nod, Sir, although you do not have a brick in your hand yet.

I am trying to cut through the nonsense that I detected in the speech of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and to get through to the essentials of what is wrong with our libraries.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman seemed to be saying that one of the problems is that people do not borrow enough library books. I presume that he knows of the Government's statistics which show that loans last year amounted to 500 million. I think that that is more per capita than any other European country. The hon. Gentleman is on the wrong tack if he is saying that the problem with our public library service is that it is not valued or used, because it certainly is.

Mr. Walden: I am sorry but I am going to say something that will shock the hon. Gentleman's egalitarian sentiments to the core. One should examine not only the statistics, which, as he knows, are a pretty crude form of measurement, but what people in fact borrow. This is dangerous territory. The word that I have in mind begins with the letter "e"—does he have it on his lips? The next letter is "l". If the hon. Gentleman examines what people borrow, one discovers that the quality is pretty depressing. Is not it awful that I am making quality judgments? The word begins with the letters "e" and "l" —has he got it? If one breaks down the statistics of the millions of books that are borrowed, one finds that the material is readily available at a cost of about £1·25—perhaps I am exaggerating because it is probably now £1·75—on the station bookstall.

I now touch on the hon. Gentleman's implied romanticism about libraries being a source for the elevation of public taste, but it is not like that. Let us be frank. I have examined the material and the hon. Gentleman clearly has not. He is talking about figures, but I am talking about the stuff that people buy. The hon. Gentleman's implication that ordinary people are able to have access to the great cultural traditions of this country, to our great literature and so on is technically true, but people do not read it. I shall not indulge in such nonsense because it is not true and the hon. Gentleman knows that. However, he must pretend that it is. He has the word beginning with "el" on his mind. I had better give him a chance to speak.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman has a justified reputation as someone with a good intellect. He is selling himself very short by such ill-informed and anecdotal nonsense. It would be interesting to know how many hours he has spent this year in public libraries. I suspect that if he is honest he might have spent a maximum of six hours there. Other people know much more about the public library service and do not rely on anecdotes and impressions gained by wandering into a library and saying, "Good Lord, Catherine Cookson has been borrowed a lot, but I don't see people borrowing Bertrand Russell" and concluding that that must mean that people borrow trash. First, that is wrong about Catherine Cookson and,

secondly, the hon. Gentleman does not understand the wide range of loans in the public library service. I speak as someone who was chairman of a public library authority for a number of years. I think that the hon. Gentleman is talking about anecdotal and wrong information. He is not doing justice to the standards of analysis that he usually sets.

Mr. Walden: That was a long intervention. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman covered his flank quickly with regard to Catherine Cookson because it was a little boast.

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman realises that several years ago authors' and public lending rights were introduced which meant that statistically our knowledge of libraries was greatly improved because we could discover who borrowed what. Instead of judging by the crude statistics of the number of books, which tell us nothing about how libraries were used, we could use computer print-outs.

Mr. Fisher *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Walden: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head defensively. The Leader of the Opposition tends to do that when he is embarrassed.

I have computer print-outs from public libraries and I base my judgment partially on them. Otherwise my judgments are based on spending quite a lot of time—slightly more than the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central gratuitously implied—in public libraries. There are 120 villages in my constituency and I go out of my way to champion, where I think it reasonable and sensible, the existence of libraries in those villages. I know what I am talking about.

I have compared what goes on in our public libraries with what goes on in public libraries in France, in Russia and in China. Perhaps the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central has done that too. Let us hear the benefit of his researches.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman should know that he is on the wrong track when he tries to adduce evidence from the public lending right because it applies only to living authors, who form quite a small amount of the book stocks of libraries. The hon. Gentleman gets only a partial view of the pattern of loans.

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman raises his most valid point so far, which is not saying a lot. What he says is true because we do not pay dead authors. If we did, Shakespeare would be in a higher class. It is obvious that we have had an important complement of knowledge through the information, which must be put together with other information, about which books by non-20th century authors people borrow. I put those figures together.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I caution my hon. Friend not to rely on public lending right figures. They relate not only to living authors, but to authors living in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very interesting, but it does not have a great deal to do with the regulations. I hope that the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) will return to the regulations.

Mr. Walden: I obey your instructions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) as another limiting factor, but I insist that the use that is made of libraries should be studied seriously and not talked about as a form of cultural romanticism, as it so often is by the Opposition Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central made the particular point that my right hon. Friend the Minister would no doubt use the regulations as an excuse to turn the financial screw on libraries when they ask for more money. First, it is slightly ironic that the representative of the Labour party, which complains so much about centralising power, should complain when my right hon. Friend decentralises power within reason through the regulations and allows local authorities to charge what they want.

Secondly, I see no difficulty in saying to local authorities, "Yes, there is a limit on money. Yes, we attach importance to what you do in providing books, but you could charge for videos and such like because we know that that is what life is about. We make an exception of books, for the obvious reason that it is rather more difficult to get people to read books. If we were to charge for them, fewer people might read them. By and large—all the arguments are open to a bit of exception—that does not apply to videos or other services. We give you liberty to charge for the other services." If at the back of my right hon. Friend's mind is the thought that some of the income from those services could be used to support book-lending facilities or to extend the range of books, that is an entirely legitimate policy. I do not suggest for a moment that that is his thought, but it is mine.

The regulations could be said to put village libraries at risk, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central has suggested, through privatisation. If that were to happen, village libraries would collapse because the clientele is too small and the libraries would not be viable. Two things need to be said about that. First, such libraries will not be privatised, because I see nothing in my right hon. Friend's statement to imply that they will. In fact, my right hon. Friend explicitly said the opposite. Secondly, earlier I said that I support all village libraries in my constituency. However, I do not support them if no one is reading their books. Let us be realistic. I have examples in my constituency where I have found it impossible to support a village library because no one has borrowed books from it. What am I supposed to do? I do not want to get into one of those cultural, romantic stews. Therefore, I say that I am sorry, but that if people start borrowing the books, I shall defend their library to the death.

Mr. Fisher: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports his village libraries, but will he tell them that they will be particularly hit by the regulations with the removal of the maximum limit for reservations? By definition, a village library tends to have a small stock. The whole basis of our public library system has involved inter-library loans and the advance reservation of books. Because of the removal of the maximum charge for reservations, the hon. Gentleman's constituents who live in rural communities will be subject to a potentially unlimited charge for reservations. They will be penalised simply because they happen to live in an area with a small library that has a small stock.

Mr. Walden: I believe that my right hon. Friend is giving scope to local authorities to charge if they wish—

[Mr. Walden]

they are at liberty to do so. If my local authority raises reservation charges to the point where my village libraries are stifled, I shall kick up a fuss.

I assume that the figures that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central quoted about reservations apply to videos as well as to books——

Mr. Fisher: There is no dispute about that.

Mr. Walden: I dispute that in the sense that I make a distinction based on the "el" word—elitist—one should not mention because there would be gasps of horror on both sides of the Chamber. I make a distinction that conforms with reality.

I do not believe that what the hon. Gentleman has envisaged will happen, because life is not like that and because I have a sensible county council and I do not believe that the regulations will have such an impact on books as the hon. Gentleman has implied. If they did have such an impact, I would make a fuss about it. I am a realist and if I discovered that my right hon. Friend had inadvertently got something wrong, I would not hesitate to draw it to his attention. However, I am so confident about his overall judgment that I doubt whether those circumstances would arise.

11.47 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the chance to speak briefly in the debate. I want to talk not about the content of the regulations, but about the manner in which they have been presented to the House. I want to raise a serious and important point.

Those of us who wish to take part in such debates like to go to the Vote Office to obtain a copy of the draft statutory instrument and to study it briefly. Obviously we turn to the explanatory note and we expect it to explain clearly what the statutory instrument is about. The explanatory note to the regulations must be read many times to be understood.

When I first arrived in the House in 1983 I raised the issue of gobbledegook. I am sure that my right hon. Friend, who is the Minister responsible for the civil service, would be the first to agree that there has been a great improvement in getting rid of such gobbledegook in documents produced by his colleagues in the civil service.

I am afraid that there has been a slip in the rate of progress when it comes to the regulations. The explanatory note states that section 8(2) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

"empowers the Lord President of the Council . . . to make regulations authorising those library authorities to make charges for such library facilities made available by them as may be specified in the regulations and to make provision as regards charges by library authorities for library facilities, other than provision requiring the making of charges, as they think fit."

I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that intelligent people can, in time and with sufficient research assistants, make sense of all that. However, that is not good enough. Those people in my right hon. Friend's Department with responsibility for writing such nonsense as an explanatory note should be sent back, as from the classroom, to rewrite it in clear language that can be understood by Members of Parliament who are too busy to waste hour after hour trying to understand the meaning of one paragraph.

I hope that I have made my point and that my right hon. Friend will discuss with his colleagues in the Ministry ways in which explanatory notes can be expressed clearly to the advantage of Members of Parliament and democracy.

11.50 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I declare an interest at the outset: I am an author.

I read the regulations with great dismay, despite the gobbledegook and my right hon. Friend's assurance that his intention was to clarify existing regulations and bring others up to date. My dismay is centred on the knowledge that the key to any free society has to be access to information. Any obstacle that is placed in the way of our citizens obtaining access to information has to be deplored. I do not want to over-egg the argument, but it is a characteristic of Soviet-style totalitarianism that either the contents of libraries or access to them is controlled. I am worried that my right hon. Friend is placing an obstacle in the way of people's access to library facilities.

My worry centres on the discretion that my right hon. Friend so enthusiastically offers to local authorities. We have had bitter experience in the past two years of what happens when local authorities are given the slightest discretion—particularly in relation to the community charge and the amount that they charge for second homes. I believe that only one local authority took the option to offer a zero rate for second homes and an overwhelming number of the authorities opted to charge double—the maximum allowed under the legislation. In the light of that, I hope that my right hon. Friend will think carefully before offering such discretion to local authorities.

I accept that there is a difference between library and information services. I would not advocate not allowing local authorities to charge commercial organisations. I am not saying that the authorities should abuse the service, but they should take advantage of it. I could quite understand if charges were introduced for commercial organisations, but I am bound to say—despite my interest in the subject—that to charge a citizen to enter a library and use its services causes me grave concern. The Government are clearly worried about the issue, otherwise they would not have imposed a three-line Whip on the measure as the time approaches midnight! When the House divides, I shall have to vote against the Government.

There is a great demand for libraries. In addition to the other libraries in Devon, there is a marvellous central library in Torquay. I pay tribute to the hard work done in those libraries, which cater for a large number of pensioners who live in my constituency, are interested in the past and wish to research various obscure details of history. It is unacceptable that pensioners should be charged for any service that they seek in the library.

I have the Royal National Institute for the Blind in my constituency, so a high proportion of the population is partially sighted. The services offered by the library to the partially sighted such as large-print books and the talking book service are extremely important. I would deplore any obstacle placed in the way of those individuals.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will respond by saying that it is all a matter of discretion and local accountability and that in a democracy local authorities should be allowed to make their own decisions on priorities in their area. However, we have had a bitter experience with the community charge. I urge my right hon. Friend to take a page out of the Prime Minister's book and ensure that every library in the country has, not a citizens charter, but a library users charter, available to everyone who goes into the library so that users are aware of exactly what they can accept, what level of service they should receive, where the Government recommend an entirely free service and on which services my right hon. Friend thinks it appropriate to place a small charge—the emphasis being on small.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), made a great deal of the minimum, maximum or norm. But the reality is—he is perfectly right in this—that the so-called maximum will be the norm. My right hon. Friend the Minister must accept that. I hope that he will take the opportunity of incorporating into such a mini citizens charter the exact rights of library users.

There are so many sacred cows when local authorities are under intense financial pressure, but libraries are the key to a free society, and I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister, even at this late stage, to think again about the draft regulations. I hope that he will not introduce them. I am bound to tell him that I shall certainly vote against them. I urge the dozens of colleagues who have come to support me this evening to follow me through the Opposition Lobby.

11.57 pm

Mr. Renton: This has been an interesting short debate. Perhaps I may start by replying to the points just made by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) which, in some measure, take up points made by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench. Both my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman suffer from a profound misunderstanding. All that we are doing in the regulations is to clarify charges which in almost every case bar the charge for reservations already exist. Library authorities have welcomed that clarification. They welcome the removal of anomalies. We are introducing some small additional charging powers, but they do not apply to the basic provision of books for reading for anyone who lives in the area or to access for people to reference books in library premises. Those services are not being touched.

Essentially we are clarifying, removing anomalies and giving additional charging powers for such matters as the destruction of a book, for which there is no such charge at present. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay really think it reasonable that there should not be a charge? If someone wishes to reserve a book and there is a cost to the library for doing so, is not it reasonable to give library authorities the right or discretion to charge—which they do not have to use?

I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay and the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, who, despite his claim that he knew absolutely everything about the library service, seems astonishingly ignorant in some respects, that what we were doing tonight is, by and large, welcomed by the library authorities. It is not welcomed by the Library Association—I regret that—but the association, in this and other matters, has taken a different view from that of FOLACL, the other professional body. The Library Association is wrong, in some respects misled, I think, by its chief executive. The Library Association makes two absurd comments in the literature it circulated to all Members, and I shall come to them in a moment.

I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay has decided to vote against the regulations. That sits ill with his own position as an author and lover of books. The regulations are designed to help and improve the library service. If I had not given this discretion to local authorities, I would have been criticised by hon. Members on both sides of the House for that, too. My hon. Friend should not forget that library authorities have an overriding statutory duty to provide an efficient and comprehensive service. If they charged so excessively that they ceased to provide such a service, there would be every ground for complaint to me as the Minister with overall responsibility for seeing that local authorities carry out their duties. I would then investigate the complaints, as I am already doing in Derbyshire and Tyneside, where customers—readers—have complained that the authorities are abusing their powers. My hon. Friend's opposition to the regulations is wholly misguided and it does not show his usual perceptiveness in these issues.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) for his support and intelligent comments. As for his arrière pensée, perhaps the income from these charges will help library authorities to increase their activities in other areas. The Green Paper brought in by my non-Machiavellian predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Sir R. Luce), suggested that by widening charges for services and increasing existing charges to economic levels public libraries' income could double from about £22 million to £50 million a year—not a large figure. The latest CIPFA figures for 1989-90 show that income stands at just over £34 million. They also show that income is increasing in real terms, and it increased by at least 20 per cent. over the previous year.

Generally, the publication of the Green Paper on library financing in 1988 made library authorities think much more about increasing income in the very ways suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham. It acted as a catalyst to make them think about what additional services they could provide on top of the basic service of providing books. They began to think about, for instance, charging for damaged books.

I accept the strictures of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on the sentence in the explanatory note that he read out. It certainly could have been better drafted. I hope that he will have found the rest of the regulations crystal clear without the help of the explanatory note.

I must reserve most of my comments for the astonishing speech by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. He has an amazing capacity to work himself into a lather about issues that do not justify it. Perhaps I misheard him, but I thought that he said that he would not oppose the regulations; that he supported them, in fact. Yet he seemed to find nothing right with them. He said that we were ruining the public library service by introducing them; that I intended to use them as a means of substituting the community charge on local authorities' areas; and so on. It added up to one of the most absurd speeches that I have ever heard.

[Mr. Renton]

The regulations bring light where there is darkness or confusion. That was the aim, and in many respects we have followed the wish of the library authorities.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister correctly recalls my opening remarks. I said that, in so far as the regulations clarify matters that were obscure in the 1964 Act, we welcomed them. The Library Association and librarians will welcome them for that reason. That is the main aim of the regulations, and the Opposition do not oppose that. I congratulate the Government on that clarification. However, as I tried to explain to the Minister, the Government were wrong to remove from the draft regulations the maximum limit on reservation charges. There are almost 7 million reservations a year, and the Minister has opened up a whole area of charging that will prove extremely onerous for public library users. We oppose that rather than the clarification.

Mr. Renton: As I said before, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I thought that in his intervention he would make a new point rather than repeat himself. I say again that FOLACL strongly supported the removal of the maximum sum of £1·50. The federation thought that if it were introduced it would become the norm or a minimum and it considered that it was much better to allow library authorities to decide the matter for themselves.

I spoke about two points in the briefing issued by the Library Association, which opposes the regulations. First, it says that it was obscure of me not to put in a maximum charge of £1·50 but rather to leave the amount to be decided by local authorities. That is a strange view. I do not think that leaving out a figure can in any sense be called obscure.

Secondly, I am again accused of obscurity because in the definition of a computer I did not agree with the association that the word "electronic" should be inserted to give a definition of a device for storing and processing information. The association suggested that on that definition a card catalogue could be the same as a computer. I have never heard of a card catalogue that had an ability to process information. As has been explained to the association, the word "electronic" was not inserted because in the current local authorities definition it is not used in the definition of a computer. We thought it better to stick to the present definition to avoid confusion.

The Government have a very good record on the public library service. Some 480 million books were issued last year. That is slightly lower than the figure for the previous year. However, the number of sound video tapes is increasing all the time. In 1989-90, the figure was 20 million, which is a great increase on previous years. At least 29 new, extended or converted library buildings were opened in 1990. Those figures come for the *Public Library Journal*. Conservatives are wholly committed to the success of the public library service. We realise its great importance, not only for the education of our children, but for the continuing education of adults. In that spirit, and in the belief that the regulations will help library authorities to develop the basic library service, I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 22nd July, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: (Mr. Harold Walker): With permission, I shall put together the remaining Orders of the Day.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 191(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Companies

That the draft Companies Act 1985 (Bank Accounts) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 16th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Banking

That the draft Bank Accounts Directive (Miscellaneous Banks) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 16th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Town and Country Planning

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 14th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 16th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Building Societies

That the draft Building Societies Act 1986 (Modifications) (No. 2) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 22nd October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Marine Pollution

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 1st November, be approved.

Industrial Organisation and Development

That the draft Scottish Seed Potato Development Council (Amendment) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 14th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Northern Ireland

That the draft Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance (Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 14th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Copyright and Neighbouring Rights

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4173/91 relating to copyright and neighbouring rights, 4174/91 relating to accession to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and the Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organisations and 4175/91 relating to rental right, lending right and certain rights related to copyright; and supports the Government's intention to seek adequate protection for

copyright owners and performing artists throughout the European Community while having regard to the needs of users of copyright works and of the services of the performers —*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Marine Simeon Ferrante

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

12.9 am

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On 14 August 1989 Royal Marine Simeon Ferrante died from head injuries he received during parachute training at RAF Brize Norton. No one meant him to die, no one wanted him to die. It was an accident, but not necessarily an unavoidable accident. Accidents do happen and often no one individual is to blame. Bad luck, a coincidence of events, momentary inattention, an act of God—any or none of these could be the cause. In the armed services, where training must necessarily be tough and realistic, accidents sometimes result in severe injury or death. This is why in peacetime safety procedures have to be stringent.

Simeon Ferrante was a green beret Marine and all that that signifies. Young, fit, courageous and keen, he was proud, as a reservist, to have attained the accolade of the distinctive head gear. That pride he shared with his close-knit family and many friends, and when he was selected for parachute training by the royals he could not contain his excitement. On 7 August 1989, his first jump went badly. He landed heavily, and, explaining to his colleagues that he had hit his head on landing, he showed clear signs of cranial injury—lassitude, nausea, headaches, vomiting and lack of concentration. They were all noticed by the students and RAF staff on the course. He attended the sick bay, something that, as many of those present who have served in the armed forces will know, in that young male society is sometimes felt to be an admission of weakness, and therefore undertaken only in extremis.

Marine Ferrante was seen by a newly qualified RAF doctor, who was one week into his first tour of duty with the RAF. That doctor has said that Simeon did not say that he had sustained a head injury on that day, and I have no reason to doubt his word; and whether his diagnosis and treatment—a viral infection and painkillers—are open to question, I am not qualified to judge. Perhaps a more probing investigation would have saved Simeon's life—I do not know.

What is also noteworthy is that the RAF instructors took no action over the following two days when Marine Ferrante continued to show the same clear symptoms. Perhaps they did not understand the significance of those symptoms—which would indicate a gap in the training of the trainers—or perhaps they were satisfied that the medical staff were handling it. I do not know, I have no access to their evidence at the board of inquiry. What I do know is that if Simeon Ferrante showed the symptoms that the—as far as I am aware—uncontested evidence says he did, he should not have been allowed to continue jump training. But continue he did, and on the third jump, on 10 August 1989, he again landed heavily, swiftly lapsed into a coma and died.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferrante understood that their son's death was the result of that last jump, and a tragic, unavoidable accident. They mourned the waste of a life, but raised no queries, for neither the services nor the Ministry had mentioned the earlier heavy landing. This they found out by chance. Then they started to ask questions. What else was being kept from them? Was

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

Simeon's death avoidable? What lessons could be learnt that might save others from the same grief that they were experiencing?

There were queries about safety equipment, the speed of response of the emergency services and medical training for parachute training instructors. There were doubts about the content and quality of evidence offered to the inquest, and real and understandable anger at the inconsiderate attitude of the RAF. The questions were many but the answers inadequate. I regret to say that Simeon's parents found the MOD unhelpful. They had to go to court to force the Ministry to provide answers. They may have to institute compensation proceedings, not for the money—it is clear that the balance of any award after costs will go to the Royal Marine Benevolent Fund—but in order to gain access to the facts.

Their experiences have led them to distrust the Ministry and that is partly the Ministry's fault, for the understandable climate of secrecy within the MOD is allowed to intrude into areas where it should have no place.

Of course, there are good reasons why the proceedings of boards of inquiry are classified, and I can think of three now. First, the proceedings may contain militarily sensitive information, but I suggest that that is not so in this case. Secondly, the privacy of proceedings encourages frank testimony, and that is always helpful. Thirdly, the facts that are disclosed at a board of inquiry may at some future date give rise to disciplinary action. However, their secrecy also creates problems. It is the MOD which decides what is disclosed, and by being at times unnecessarily secretive it gives the impression that it has something to hide even when it has not. It feeds the suspicion that secrecy is abused to cover up mistakes rather than keep secrets. That may be an entirely unworthy suspicion, but it is an understandable one, and one which does nothing but damage.

The families and the friends of those who are killed or injured need the reassurance of frankness to enable them to come to terms with their tragedy. Service men and their families would like the certainty of knowing that the faults that endangered their lives cannot be hidden under the cloak of secrecy and then ignored. There needs to be another way—a clearly independent way—of determining what should be disclosed when a board of inquiry is convened to investigate why a death or injury occurred in peacetime.

I shall suggest just one way in which that could be done. It could be by the appointment of a senior independent judge. He would comment on the terms of reference when a board was set up to examine a peacetime death or injury. He would be empowered to decide in what form and how much, and to whom, evidence from the board was disclosed. His aim would be the greatest possible frankness consistent with the nation's security and the rights of those who are involved in an inquiry. His recommendations could then be overruled only by a Minister, who in turn would be answerable to Parliament.

There may be a better way. It may be that tonight my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will suggest a better or different way. It is unlikely, however, that there could be a way more calculated to breed suspicion and thus damage the armed services than the one that we have now.

I believe that the Ferrante family has a right to the truth, even, or particularly, if it discloses negligence. The services have the right to expect that Ministers will not allow the fear of compensation costs to deter them from exposing those errors that make peacetime training unnecessarily hazardous. We all have the right to expect that those in the MOD or the services who deal with these sad cases have the compassion and sensitivity to put themselves in the position of the bereaved or that of the injured, and then to treat them as they themselves would wish to be treated.

We all understand that there are times when secrecy is essential. There are times, however, when it is unnecessary, unhelpful and cruel. The Ministry and my right hon. Friend are not unthinking, uncaring or unwilling to change. I hope that the case of Simeon Ferrante, tragically dead before his time, will be the spur that brings that change about.

12.18 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) for bringing this case to the attention of the House, thereby affording me the opportunity to allay any fears that the Ministry of Defence is an uncaring and secretive Department.

Obviously there is nothing that can be said to the families that could alleviate their anguish at the tragic loss of their son. Nevertheless, I want to express to them publicly my sincere sympathy. I should now like to respond to certain of the major criticisms that have been levelled at my Department.

Simeon Ferrante enlisted in the Royal Marine Reserves on 12 November 1985, and joined a parachuting course for reservist soldiers and marines run by No. 1 Parachute Training School, RAF Brize Norton, from 30 July to 11 August 1989. He was parachuting at RAF Weston-on-the-Green on 10 August when he landed badly. He died four days later. On the day after the accident, a unit inquiry was convened at RAF Brize Norton and, following his death, a coroner's inquest was held, at which a verdict of accidental death was recorded.

Since then, my Department has received a considerable number of inquiries from the father and from hon. Members. There have been allegations of obsessive secrecy and that there may have been a cover-up over the circumstances surrounding the incident. There have been specific criticisms to which my hon. Friend referred, and to which I shall respond.

I will first cover Marine Ferrante's fitness to jump. It has been suggested that he had an accident on 7 August and should not have been allowed to jump on 10 August. It has been alleged that the Ministry of Defence refused to admit that Marine Ferrante had suffered a previous injury prior to that received on 10 August 1989. That is not so. My Department has never disputed the fact that Marine Ferrante was involved in two incidents, and that came out clearly at the coroner's inquest.

The records show that on 7 August, following a jump, Marine Ferrante vomited at the drop site and was referred to the medical attendant, who instructed him to see the doctor. There was no evidence to suggest that he had landed badly on that occasion. On questioning Marine Ferrante, the doctor was told that he had sustained a slight blow to the head on landing on 4 August 1989, which he

had not reported previously. The doctor carried out a full neurological examination but could find no evidence of injury, and concluded that he was suffering from a viral infection. Marine Ferrante was told to report back if there was no improvement in his condition or if it should worsen. I think that is important, because we were depending on Marine Ferrante to come back if his condition continued.

Parachute training instructions tell trainees that they should jump only if fit to do so. As an added safeguard, before leaving the aircraft, trainees have to confirm that they are ready and willing to jump; anyone who is not happy for any reason is not allowed to continue. The doctor had examined Marine Ferrante and found no reason to declare him unfit for duty, but had instructed him to report back to the medical centre if there was no improvement. There is no evidence that he reported back, and it must be presumed that he had regarded himself as being fit to jump on that fateful day.

I should mention that Marine Ferrante had jumped once already on 10 August, and it was following the second jump on that day that the accident occurred.

Having received the report of the RAF medical officer who examined Marine Ferrante prior to the jump of 10 August, the pathologist at the coroner's inquest commented that he understood that approximately five days before his acute head injury, Marine Ferrante had received another blow on the head—but there was no evidence of that at the post-mortem examination.

It has been claimed that the RAF were unhelpful and did not liaise with Mr. Ferrante or his family following the accident and subsequent death. Simeon Ferrante was a Royal Marine Reservist, and as such it is normal practice in an incident of that kind for the welfare support to the injured person and his family to be provided by the parent unit, rather than by the unit where the accident occurred. Obviously, the two services liaised closely, but the Marines took the lead in that regard, with the officers and senior NCOs of Marine Ferrante's parent unit, Royal Marines Reserve, Bristol, becoming actively involved from the outset by contacting the family to identify what support was needed.

Although a private funeral was held, there was a military attendance. The station commander at RAF Brize Norton wrote to the family expressing his condolences two days after Marine Ferrante had died. He subsequently received a letter from Mr. Ferrante, thanking him for the discreet and sympathetic manner in which he and the RAF had conducted themselves. Not unreasonably, the station commander at RAF Brize Norton concluded that Mr. Ferrante felt that everything had been done that could be done and that the Royal Marines were providing the necessary follow-on support.

There followed a series of letters from Mr. Ferrante, seeking details of his son's death. Because the exchange of correspondence appeared not to be helpful to Mr. Ferrante, two senior RAF officers visited Mr. and Mrs. Ferrante in an attempt to answer all Mr. Ferrante's questions, and to allay any misgivings that he might have about the circumstances surrounding the accident. When the officers left Mr. Ferrante, they believed that they had answered his questions fully and satisfactorily; indeed, they subsequently received a telephone call of thanks and a letter from Mr. Ferrante. Mr. Ferrante, however, continued to ask the same questions.

An inquiry was convened on 11 August 1989 at RAF Brize Norton. Its terms of reference were wide ranging, and designed to establish the full facts. Among the more important considerations was the requirement to determine the cause of the accident and whether anyone had failed in his duties, and to make any appropriate recommendation.

The inquiry found that Marine Ferrante was injured in the course of the performance of his official duties. There was no question of any negligence on his part; he had exercised reasonable care throughout. The inquiry also found that the staff of No.1 Parachute Training School had taken reasonable care in training Marine Ferrante. After he had completed six parachute descents to a satisfactory standard, they were entitled to believe that Marine Ferrante was capable of safely undertaking his seventh training descent. The seventh descent was properly organised and controlled, and therefore the inquiry found that no member of staff had failed in his duty.

The inquiry made some recommendations for change —that a servicing schedule should be introduced for all types of parachutists' helmets, that at the start of all courses a check should be made by a safety equipment fitter of each trainee's helmet, that trainees should be instructed in the proper use and care of their helmets—including internal and external serviceability checks—and that standing orders should be reviewed to reflect current procedures for checking helmets.

The inquiry was completed on 18 September 1989. It was subsequently reopened following a request from the coroner's office that further witnesses be called, and that statements be taken from them to enable the inquiry to determine the date on which Marine Ferrante first received a blow to the head; to resolve any points of difference between existing evidence and the new statements taken from students on the same course as Marine Ferrante; and to clarify any points arising, amending previous findings if necessary.

All Marine Ferrante's fellow students were asked whether they had witnessed Marine Ferrante receiving any injury on either 4 or 7 August. Statements were taken from those who felt that they could contribute to the investigation. Those witnesses were called to the reopened inquiry. Having considered their statements along with the previous ones, the inquiry considered that its original finding should remain unchanged. It concluded that Marine Ferrante first sustained a blow to the head on 4 August 1989.

Mr. Ferrante was issued with a summary of the inquiry on 10 July 1990 and, following his successful application for a writ for pre-action discovery of documents, his solicitors have been sent the full report.

That brings me to one of the crucial areas in which my Department has been criticised—that of excessive secrecy in the refusal to give Mr. Ferrante a full copy of the inquiry report. It may help if I say a few words about the status and purpose of board of inquiry reports.

The Royal Air Force derives its authority for holding boards of inquiry from the Air Force Act 1955, statutory rules made thereunder and Queen's regulations for the RAF. Boards of inquiry may inquire into all manner of things. Generally, their primary purpose is to investigate and report on the facts about the matter referred to them by the convening authority, and to make recommendations aimed at preventing a recurrence of an accident.

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

It is of overriding importance, particularly in cases of injury or death, to establish the facts as quickly as possible. Lives may depend on it. It is essential, therefore, that witnesses appearing before a board of inquiry should give their evidence in a full and frank manner. One must remember that some of the witnesses will be young, or of very junior rank; they may be required to give their evidence in difficult circumstances; they may have to criticise the actions of fellow service men, their close comrades even, or of their senior officers; or they may themselves have made mistakes which contributed to an incident, about which, for the good of the services, we would want them to be completely open and frank. Board of inquiry procedures have, therefore, been designed to do everything possible to encourage witnesses to come forward and to be absolutely candid when giving their evidence to this end.

Boards of inquiry are conducted as internal investigations. They are not held in public. Section 135(5) of the Air Force Act 1955 provides that evidence given by a witness may not be used against him in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings. The report of the board of inquiry is regarded as confidential to the service and the Department and, unless the courts order otherwise, only those within the service and the Department who need to see it in the course of their duties will see it.

Equally I must emphasise that it is not the wish of the services to deny those with a genuine and valid interest their right to know what happened in a particular incident. My hon. Friend's constituent clearly had such a right in this case. It is, therefore, my Department's practice to make available on request a narrative summary of the Department's investigations, which contains all the material facts. As I have explained, this procedure was followed in Mr. Ferrante's case. In addition, my Department endeavoured to answer the large number of supplementary questions raised by Mr. Ferrante both through direct correspondence and under cover of correspondence from my hon. Friend. Mr. Ferrante has remained dissatisfied with what I consider to be the very positive response of my Department, and to this end Mr. Ferrante has, in contemplation of taking legal proceedings, obtained an order from the courts for discovery of documents. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on these proceedings. I am, however, satisfied that my Department, through the good offices of the Treasury Solicitor, has made every effort to comply with the terms of the order.

An inquest into the death of Marine Ferrante was opened and adjourned on 15 August 1989. The inquest was reopened on 6 June 1990 and returned a verdict of accidental death. It has been alleged by Mr. Ferrante that his son suffered a previous head injury which contributed to his death, but, in view of the lack of reliable evidence, the coroner left this point open. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the findings of the inquest. Mr. Ferrante is not content with this conclusion and wishes to have the inquest reopened. While my Department has no reason to dispute the findings of Her Majesty's coroner for Oxford, it would not object to a reopened inquest if that was considered to be necessary.

At the inquest, there was some discussion of the condition of the helmets used by trainee parachutists at RAF Brize Norton. Following the death of Marine Ferrante, an RAF safety fitter, responsible for examination and servicing of RAF flying helmets rather than the Army parachute helmets used on this course, inspected the Army helmets and considered a large number to be in a poor condition. However, an expert from the stores and clothing research and development establishment told the inquest that the defects were "normal wear" and were not of

"significance with respect to the impact performance"

of the helmets. Furthermore, the evidence of the pathologist was that for the particular injury sustained by Marine Ferrante

"there is no form of helmet than can help."

It has also been alleged that accident and emergency services provision at Weston-on-the-Green were inadequate and that a specialist ambulance should have been summoned from Frenchay hospital, Bristol. There is always an ambulance with a medical attendant present whenever parachuting is taking place. I have to say that the service ambulance in which Marine Ferrante was taken to the John Radcliffe hospital was equipped to the standard of a crash ambulance on the fire line of an RAF operational flying station. It contained resuscitation equipment and was equipped with a blue light, which was activated in transporting Marine Ferrante to the nearest hospital. The hospital was advised in advance to expect him and I have no doubt provided the highest standard of care, for which it is rightly renowned.

Another area of concern to Mr. Ferrante is whether training is given to parachute instructors so that they will recognise concussion or other forms of illness that could impair the safety of trainee parachutists and what first aid training is given. All parachute jumping instructors obtain a first-aid certificate during basic training as a physical training instructor. That includes the recognition of concussion. There is no requirement for training to be given in the recognition of any forms of illness, as trainees have immediate access to fully qualified medical officers the moment they feel unwell. During all forms of parachute training, there is a medical attendant and ambulance available at all times. There is always an individual responsibility to report sick if the trainee considers that he is unfit to continue training. That is laid down in Queen's regulations.

Following the inquest, the Ministry wrote to Mr. Ferrante on 17 August 1990 suggesting that he seek legal advice in respect of submitting a claim against the Ministry. I can assure the House that my Department will not attempt to avoid responsibility should negligence be established.

I should like to deal with the difficulty that my Department experienced in corresponding with Mr. Ferrante. In the period immediately following this tragic accident, Mr. Ferrante wrote a large number of letters to RAF officers. The recipients of the letters recognised the right of Mr. Ferrante to be given as much information as possible about his son's death, and gave him detailed replies. However, it is not our practice, for the reasons I have described, to disclose verbatim proceedings of boards of inquiry, although we are always prepared to provide an accurate summary to the next of kin.

Mr. Ferrante was visited by two RAF officers, who sought to explain the situation. Following that meeting, the correspondence continued and was addressed to a wide range of RAF officers and officials throughout my

Department. The House will understand the dilemma facing those responsible for corresponding with Mr. Ferrante. On the one hand, they wished to give a grieving father the information that he needed to come to terms with the death of his son, and on the other they wished to avoid perpetuating the correspondence. Once all the facts that could have been given had been given, there was little more to be said. My officials considered this matter most carefully and decided in October 1990 to advise Mr. Ferrante that no further letters from him would be answered. That decision was not taken lightly and of course it did not extend to correspondence from hon. Members from whom 12 inquiries have been received and answered. Correspondence has also continued with Mr. Ferrante's legal advisers.

Mr. Ferrante's legal advisers wrote to the Department in February this year intimating that a claim would be made. That was followed by an order for discovery of certain documentation that would allow them to advise their client whether any proceedings brought by him would have reasonable prospects of success.

I have attempted to explain as fully as possible the background to the public unease surrounding the death of Marine Simeon Ferrante. I have stated that my Department will not try to avoid responsibility should anybody be blamed for this tragic accident. Clearly, in addressing the question of liability, we will need to consider the claim which, I understand, Mr. Ferrante will be presenting. As I have said, we await a statement of claim which, when received, will be considered by my Department in consultation with legal advisers.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Mature Women

1. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department has introduced to help mature women get back into the work force.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): Some 2·5 million more women are now in work than in 1983. That encouraging development has been assisted by a wide range of measures undertaken by the Government. They include the deregulation of labour markets, where there has been a 29 per cent. increase in female part-time employment and an almost threefold real-terms increase in Government-funded training programmes, in which women participate extensively.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and understand the Government's appreciation of the need for mature women in the labour market. Will he find time to consider the plight of my constituent, Mrs. Christine Williamson, who, after 25 years at home nursing a severely disabled child is now able to go back into the labour market, but finds herself in a Catch-22 situation? She cannot get a job without training and she cannot get training from the Basildon authorities so as to make herself available for work.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would make a good Adjournment debate.

Mrs. Gorman: That, she tells me, is because the training is given to school leavers.

Mr. Jackson: I shall be happy to talk to my hon. Friend about her constituent's case. On the face of it, my immediate response is that, first, she should contact the local training and enterprise council, which will do its best to help. Secondly, I draw her attention to the career development loan scheme which the Government are funding. That is a helpful and positive scheme which has been developing successfully in recent years.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that the occupational apartheid that exists in this country is clearly the result of over-costly and inadequate child care facilities and inflexible and unsatisfactory training provision? Precisely what do the Government intend to do to ensure that mature women have access to the proper sort of training and the necessary child care to allow them to play their full role in the labour market?

Mr. Jackson: I know that the Labour party is likely to conduct a vendetta against part-time workers, many of whom are women, although when women are asked what they think about part-time work, they reply that they very much appreciate it. We are doing more for training than any previous Government and the Labour party is in no position to lecture us on that subject.

EC Social Charter

2. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect implementation of the EC social charter would have on unemployment in the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): Much of the proposed legislation under the European Commission's social action programme would be very damaging for the United Kingdom. The working time directive alone would impose crippling costs of more than £5 billion on United Kingdom employers. That assessment is confirmed by analysis from business and independent academic organisations.

Mr. Brown: In view of my right hon. and learned Friend's comments about the £5 billion cost of implementing that programme, will he give a categorical assurance that there is no way, in any circumstances, in which the present Government—or any Government if they were acting responsibly—could possibly accept the social charter? Would not it be a recipe for disaster in the offshore oil industry, in agriculture and in the hotel and catering industry? Would not it be a disaster for part-time workers, women workers and, indeed, all workers in Britain?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. I assure him that the Government will do all that they can to resist the imposition of such measures on this country. However, I must tell him that it is a draft directive, which has been brought forward by the Commission, utterly spuriously, on grounds of health and safety. As such, it is alleged that it is appropriate to be dealt with on the basis of qualified majority voting. Although we shall do our utmost to resist it, I cannot give my hon. Friend a guarantee that we will be successful in that endeavour.

Ms. Quin: Is the Secretary of State concerned that some workers in Britain get such low wages that they are forced to apply for social security benefit? Does he believe that bad employers should be subsidised by the state in that way? If not, why will not he accept the provisions of the social charter which would attack the problem of low pay?

Mr. Howard: In fact, the social action programme does not contain proposals related to low pay, as the hon. Lady suggested. Family credit is one of the great advances of social legislation. It is one of the ways in which we ensure that, so far as possible, people are better off in work than out of work. If the hon. Lady would read some of the reports from the OECD and other reputable organisations, she would see the extent to which those organisations commend our practices in those matters.

Mr. Irvine: My right hon. and learned Friend said that he would do all that he could to resist those directives. In view of his assessment of the damage that they are likely to cause to employment in this country, will he say under which article of the treaty of Rome they have been proposed? If the Government do not have the power of veto and we risk having those directives imposed on us, it is an extremely serious matter.

Mr. Howard: I agree that it is a serious matter. The directives are proposed under article 118A, which is subject to qualified majority voting. I am doing my utmost to persuade my colleagues in the Council of Ministers that it would make no sense, for the European Community as well as this country, if the directives were promulgated in their present form.

Mr. Blair: Is not the real reason why the Secretary of State makes those absurd and fictitious claims about the effect of the social charter, which bears no resemblance to the reality of the proposals, that he dare not admit that the Government are opposed, not just in detail but in principle, to the idea of binding employment standards across the Community? Will he now answer the question of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and confirm that when the Prime Minister goes to Maastricht he will sign no treaty that allows qualified majority voting on any aspect of employment law?

Mr. Howard: What the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question was entirely wrong. I refer him to the independent Centre for Economic Policy Research, where Professor Denis Snower recently published a document saying:

"Implementing the social charter may be expected to hurt precisely those workers it seeks to help, in addition to raising unemployment and reducing investment".

This year's Employment Institute economic report on the social charter found that

"attempts by the Government to foster labour market flexibility . . . will be undermined by the directives presently contained within the Social Action Programme."

As for the hon. Gentleman's question, the Prime Minister made the Government's position entirely clear in a debate on that matter in the House last week.

Training and Enterprise Councils

3. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Transport and General Workers Union about training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Howard: None, Sir.

Mr. Stewart: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Transport and General Workers Union has been wrong on all the major issues facing the country in the past 12 years? It has been wrong on unilateralism and trade union legislation and wrong about the man whom it picked to lead the Labour party. Will not it be wrong yet again on the training and enterprise councils?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is noteworthy that, last July, the TGWU voted to boycott youth training, employment training and the training and enterprise councils on the day before the Leader of the Opposition went to its conference and said that, in so many ways, that union was the Labour party. I hope that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) will, in the House this afternoon, condemn the antediluvian attitudes of the TGWU, which sponsors him, and which turns its back on help for the unemployed made available by the Government.

Mr. Strang: Does not the Secretary of State understand that it is precisely because the TGWU is so committed to effective training and the future expansion of British industry that it is not prepared to give credence to the Government's sham arrangements? When will the Government provide effective training with effective allowances? Do not the Secretary of State's earlier answers make it clear that his vision of Britain in the future is a low-wage economy with the worst employment conditions in Europe?

Mr. Howard: That is an interesting question. The hon. Gentleman obviously does not think that training and enterprise councils should be supported. I shall be interested to discover whether that view is shared by the Labour spokesmen who trail round the country assuring training and enterprise councils of their support. Which is the true view of the Labour party? The hon. Gentleman criticised youth training, when almost 90 per cent. of those who complete youth training go on to a job or further education and two thirds of them obtain a qualification. How dare the hon. Gentleman cast a slur on the training arrangements currently in place in this country?

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is not the problem with the TGWU the fact that the only objective that it regards as important in the House is to support the Labour party? That is why the TGWU will not invite to any of its meetings in the House any Member of Parliament who is not also a Labour party member. That shows how biased the TGWU has become in its policies.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that example, which I had not previously come across. It demonstrates that there is no limit to the idiocy of the TGWU in such matters.

Bank Holidays

4. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total number of bank holidays in each of the EC countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): Only the United Kingdom and Ireland have bank holidays as such. A detailed list is available in the Library, but the number of public holidays varies between seven in the Netherlands and 14 in Spain. Most countries have nine.

Mr. Grocott: The Minister has different figures from the official figures in the Library. Will he confirm that Britain, with eight bank holidays, has fewer national public holidays than any other European Community country? Given that we hear so much from the Government about level playing fields, is not it time that we had a level playing field in employment conditions? Will the Minister introduce in the near future proposals enabling us to have at least as many national holidays as other European countries?

Mr. Forth: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman is anxious to bribe the electorate with yet another promise. He was incorrect to say that we have fewer national

holidays than any other European country—the Netherlands has fewer than us. He also ignored the fact that the majority of other European Community members do not give a compensatory day off when a national holiday falls at a weekend, as is normal practice in the United Kingdom. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has made an estimate of the cost impact on British business or the United Kingdom economy of the proposal that he apparently makes so glibly. If his suggestion is yet another example of the well-thought-out policies of the Labour party, we should be given a carefully calculated costing of such a proposal before it is introduced in such a casual manner.

Mr. Madel: Is not there a case for introducing a statutory bank holiday between the August bank holiday and Christmas, which is a long period? Should not there also be a statutory holiday to coincide with half-term?

Mr. Forth: I am aware of a wide body of opinion that exactly supports my hon. Friend's proposal. However, there is an equally wide body of opinion, expressed mainly by manufacturing industries, which oppose such a move because it believes that it would disrupt the long period of uninterrupted production between the August holiday and the Christmas break. It is a finely balanced argument and so far we have not been persuaded by my hon. Friend's case.

Unemployment

5. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total increase in uneployment throughout the countries of the Common Market during the past year; and what was the percentage of that increase in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: No comparable estimates are available on the numbers unemployed in European Community countries or on the proportion of the increase in European Community unemployment resulting from rises in unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Flannery: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that he is avoiding the reality because it is so embarrassing. We had a slump in 1981—long before anyone else—which was when our unemployment problem began. We are now in a second slump, which will continue for a long time yet, and unemployment is rising. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman admit that more than 80 per cent. of unemployment in the whole of Europe during the past year was in this country?

Mr. Howard: That is a misleading statistic. Far from avoiding reality, I was merely seeking to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. If he is interested in what is happening in the European Community, he could do no better than cast his eyes across to France where a socialist Government have just announced that country's highest-ever unemployment level.

Mr. Watts: Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House of any European Community country with a higher proportion of its adult population in work than the United Kingdom? Will he tell us which European country enjoyed the greatest growth in the number of jobs during the 1980s?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. Between 1983 and 1989, the latest period for which comparable figures are available, more than twice as many jobs were created in Britain compared with the rest of the EC.

Mr. McLeish: Why is it that in the 12 months to September this year unemployment in Europe rose by 7 per cent., but in the United Kingdom it rose by 40 per cent? Why is it that among men in the 11 other EC countries unemployment rose by 86,000, but in the United Kingdom it rose by 609,000? Why is it that among women in the 11 other EC countries unemployment fell by 32 per cent., but in Britain it rose by 172,000? Is not that the result of the Government's characteristic incompetence? Does not that show that on the European front we are moving towards not convergence, but divergence? We have supplied the answers that the Minister refused to give to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) this afternoon.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. If he wants to make European comparisons, I refer him, as I referred the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), to what is happening in France. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that the increase in unemployment last month was the lowest for almost a year, that it was the third successive fall in the rate of increase and that it shows that the rate of increase in unemployment in Britain is now coming down fast. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that development.

Mr. Marlow: Would it not be reasonable to be a little more objective? I think that it is an open secret that if the misfortune of a Labour Government being returned at the next election were to befall Britain there would be the mother and father of financial crises, which would lead to an increase in interest rates of at least 2 per cent. What effect would that have on employment in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right, but he is characteristically modest in his assessment. He referred to only one of the Opposition's policies that would wreak havoc on the British economy. In addition, there are the policies that they have been advocating from the Front Bench this afternoon on the European social action programme, a national statutory minimum wage and trade union law reform, which would make it easier to strike and to have more frequent and more damaging strikes. All that would reinforce the particular policy to which my hon. Friend referred and would damage tremendously the prospects of the British people and destroy countless jobs.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Secretary of State agree that the recent announcement of 300 pay-offs in Harland and Wolff, which has just had an increase in its order book does not augur well for the economy? Do not the Government need to give more attention to devising a regional strategy within Europe?

Mr. Howard: I especially regret those redundancies, as I regret all redundancies. However, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Government have gone to great lengths to help the Northern Ireland economy and I am sure that the measures that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is taking will continue to alleviate the situation in the Province.

Small Businesses

6. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet representatives of the small firms sector to discuss the problem of small businesses.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have frequent meetings with representatives of the small firms sector and will continue to do so.

Mr. Bellingham: Can my hon. Friend confirm that it is the Government's intention to continue to reduce taxes and deregulate, both of which will help small businesses? Is he aware that the Opposition claim to be the friend of the small business man? How does my hon. Friend think that they square that with their policies of imposing a payroll tax on small businesses and of gaoling small business men who fail to pay a socialist minimum wage?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has made some important points. It is correct that Britain has one of the lowest rates of corporate tax in the developed world, something from which our businesses, large and small, have benefited enormously over the years. The Government are committed, when possible, to continue to drive down burdens on industry and rates of tax. It is equally true that Opposition Members seem obsessed with pursuing the business community with prosecutions and they frequently question me about that across a wide range of Government policies—something which I regret, but with which I have become rather familiar. The Government are committed to increasing the possibilities for businesses, large and small, and to encouraging the growth of businesses and self-employment. Our policies have been a huge success up to now and we are determined to ensure that they will continue to be so.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister accept that in a recession in which many small businesses have gone to the wall, their failure is often identified with the late payment by large companies of their debts? What steps, other than expressing sympathy and exhortation, will the Minister and the Government take to enforce interest payments on debt and to streamline court procedures, so that it will not be too burdensome for small businesses to pursue their creditors?

Mr. Forth: There have been a number of business failures over the past, very difficult, few months, but I hasten to add that the level of new business start-ups remains resilient and robust. Under the national enterprise allowance scheme administered by the new training and enterprise councils, 1,000 new businesses have been coming into existence every week this year. I am conscious of the late payment problem, which is something to which we are devoting great attention.

Recently, we issued a new package of measures, "Making the Cash Flow", in consultation with the Institute of Credit Management and the Confederation of British Industry. I have personally written to the chairmen of the country's 100 largest companies urging them to regard prompt payment as a matter of best practice. However, I remain to be convinced that legislation would be beneficial. As yet, the bulk of the country's small business organisations are not persuaded either, but I will keep a close eye on that matter.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend recall that I was the first Minister to have responsibility for small businesses—even before the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)? Will my hon. Friend do as I did and haul the leading debtors among large firms before him, to tell them that unless they jolly well pay their debts, Government legislation to force them to do so will follow? Will my hon. Friend also bear in mind——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question, please.

Sir Anthony Grant: In his discussions, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that small firms want, more than anything, a reduction in interest rates?

Mr. Forth: I am constantly conscious of my illustrious predecessors and daily find it difficult to fill their shoes. As I said when answering the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) I have written individually to the chairmen of the 100 largest companies urging them to pay close attention to settling their debts on time. I have received personal replies from most of them, giving me assurances that that will be done. I extend a standing invitation to any firm that is not being paid on time by any of the country's 100 largest companies or Government Departments to allow me to take up its case individually. I have already done so with some success in a number of instances and I hope to continue doing so.

Mr. Cryer: The Government are supposed to support small firms, but is not the reality that they have been betraying them? High interest rates have driven hundreds of thousands of small firms out of business over the past 10 years and the loss of more than 2 million jobs in manufacturing industry has carried with it, to their doom, many small firms that depended on larger businesses. Is not it the case that the sooner the Government face a general election and are defeated, the sooner small firms will have a decent chance in the economy?

Mr. Forth: I am surprised that another of my predecessors—I choose my words very carefully—should show such ignorance about the small business sector. My figures show that although there were 34,000 business failures in the first nine months of this year, every week 1,000 new businesses have come into existence under the enterprise allowance scheme alone. The National Westminster bank, for example, opened 76,000 new small business accounts in the first six months of this year, which suggests a robust small firms sector. Although I would be the last to claim that small businesses are without their problems, it is a great tribute to the entrepreneurs and to the small business men of this country that they can deal with difficult circumstances in such a way. We pledge to continue to support them in that. I invite them to examine the Opposition's policies to see how they would fare under a Labour Government.

Mr. Butterfill: Is not it true that a large number of small firms are in the tourism sector? Will my hon. Friend confirm that he received representations from both the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board about the damage that would be done to the industry by the restrictions on part-time working and on working hours which are so beloved of Labour?

Mr. Forth: Only yesterday, my hon. Friend and I met a number of eminent representatives of the tourist industry from across the European Community. They expressed the

unanimous view that the proposals contained in the working time directive, which is to be considered by the Council of Ministers next week, would be extremely damaging to the tourist industry throughout the Community.

We in this country are very much aware of the problem. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will take the case to his colleagues in the Council of Ministers and ask them to look again at the proposals, which would be damaging not only to British industry but to industries—including tourism—right across the Community. We hope that we shall be able to make sense prevail.

Employment Statistics

7. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are in employment in Leeds, West.

Mr. Jackson: The most recent estimates of employment by parliamentary constituency are from the September 1989 census of employment, when there were 25,100 employees in employment in the Leeds, West constituency.

Mr. Battle: Unemployment in my constituency has risen by 43 per cent. in the past year, and there has been a marked increase in temporary and part-time working. Is the Minister aware that the cracker he pulls this Christmas will probably have been packaged by a home worker, as will the Christmas cards and gift tags? Does he realise that home workers in my constituency receive as little as 40p an hour? What action will the Government take to ensure that home workers obtain well-paid, reasonable employment—or does the Minister intend to revel in the Christmas season while home workers cannot afford to do so?

Mr. Jackson: Yet again, Labour is demonstrating that it is engaged in a vendetta against part-time workers. I hope that part-time workers will take note of that. Labour's policies would eliminate the part-time and home-working jobs that are available. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman really appreciates the consequences of the policies that he supports.

Catrine and Dalmellington Offices

8. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the proposal by the Employment Service Agency to close the offices at Catrine and Dalmellington.

Mr. Jackson: I have had three representations, including the hon. Gentleman's own.

Mr. Foulkes: Cumnock and Doon Valley district council was grateful to the Minister for holding a meeting with the council and with me. Does he recall, however, that at that meeting we pointed out that unemployment in Catrine and Dalmellington is about 14 and 15 per cent. respectively, and that male unemployment is about 18 and 19 per cent. respectively? Is this not a strange time to close offices which provide assistance for so many unemployed people? Will the Minister think again?

Mr. Jackson: I very much appreciated the opportunity to meet some of the hon. Gentleman's constituents in a delegation. We had a very useful discussion, as a result of which steps have been taken—particularly in Dalmellington, where there is an asbestos problem, making it unfeasible for the building to be reopened, but we are extending the outreach facilities there following the meeting, and I think that the hon. Gentleman is making progress. We are improving what the employment service has to offer in the new integrated offices, as all hon. Members who have been to see them will know. That includes offices in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Unemployment

9. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment in 1979, 1983 and 1987; and what it is now.

Mr. Howard: On the consistent seasonally adjusted basis, United Kingdom unemployment was 1,052,500 in October 1979, 2,819,200 in October 1983, 2,641,900 in October 1987 and 2,472,900 in October 1991.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Secretary of State imagine that such figures could have been given to any other Parliament in the European Community—especially in a country that had enjoyed a North sea oil bonanza over the years? Is this not utterly disgusting? Can the Secretary of State tell us the real social cost to our country of the devastation of our manufacturing industry and our economy? When will the Government retire from office so that something can be done?

Mr. Howard: Unemployment is higher in a number of other European countries. In Socialist France, it is now higher than it has ever been in that country's history. Unemployment is rising in every European country except Spain, where it is nearly twice as high as it is here, and in every European Free Trade Association country, and in every G7 country it is higher than it was a year ago. Those are the facts which the hon. Gentleman should remember when supporting his own party's policies, which would destroy countless jobs in this country.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Secretary of State aware that every Labour Government since 1929, bar one, has doubled unemployment? Has he any evidence that Opposition policies could convince us that a future Labour Government would be any different from past ones?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. The one exception to that doleful list of Labour Governments who doubled unemployment during their term of office saw unemployment increase by 50 per cent. The raft of policies that the Opposition are putting before the British people would be devastating to job prospects, and so ashamed are they of the consequences of their policies that four Labour members of the Select Committee on Employment last week voted down a proposal to hold an inquiry into the effects of national statutory minimum wage because they wanted to hide the truth about that policy from the British people.

Mr. Blair: As the Secretary of State introduced employment action as an emergency programme for the jobless almost six months ago, since when unemployment has risen by several hundred thousand, can he tell us precisely how many people are on employment action?

Mr. Howard: Employment action is making excellent progress. The last time the hon. Gentleman raised the

subject of employment action in the House, he criticised the Government for providing funding for only one year. The funding is now secure for three years.

Mr. Blair: But how many people are on it?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman is seriously concerned about unemployment—*[Interruption.]*—he ought to have a word with his hon. Friends on the Select Committee who tried to cover up the consequences of his policy. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Noises of this kind are very unseemly.

Mr. Ashby: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in 1983 unemployment in my Leicestershire, North-West constituency was 14 per cent. and that now it is 6 per cent? Is he also aware that we lost 6,500 jobs due to mine closures and that 1,000 additional jobs have been created—a total of 7,500 extra jobs since 1983? Does that not show that the Government's policies over the years have been courageous?

Mr. Howard: The experience in my hon. Friend's constituency is typical of the experience across the country. There are more than 2·5 million additional jobs now, compared with 1983. That is the result of the policies that have consistently been followed by this Government. A large number of those jobs would be destroyed if the Labour party were ever in a position to put its policies into practice.

London Weighting

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average level of London weighting allowance paid to employees in *(a)* inner London and *(b)* outer London at the latest date of which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not collect data on London weighting allowances.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister is probably aware that the additional cost of living in inner London is more than £4,000 per year and in outer London more than £3,500 per year. Given that the private sector median allowance is £1,500 extra in inner London and £1,000 extra in outer London, will the Government ensure that their public sector pay policy follows the private sector and that they compensate people who work in London for the substantial additional cost of living in London?

Mr. Forth: It would be fascinating to speculate on why the cost of living in inner London is so high. The hon. Gentleman and I might be able to agree that it is not unadjacent to the fact that so many inner London authorities are controlled by the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman knows that questions relating to civil service pay determination and detailed pay arrangements are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am therefore unable to answer this question today, but I will bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that London is only one of several areas where costs are wildly out of line with the national average—sometimes higher and sometimes lower? It would be healthy for public services and for dole queues if we could move away from national wage bargaining in a variety of areas.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Average earnings in London are about £100 per week higher than in regions outside London. The marketplace has, therefore, already taken some account of the differentials. My hon. Friend is correct—it must make sense to have pay bargaining as near as possible to the point and location of work so as to make the labour market work as efficiently as possible and to reward people as fairly as possible.

Small Businesses

11. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the economic prospects for the small business sector.

Mr. Forth: There are now unmistakable signs of the end of the recession. Business starts continue at a high rate, with more than 1,000 per week throughout the spring and summer under enterprise allowance alone. Interest rates have been cut eight times since last October. Inflation is at its lowest level for three and a half years.

The Government's past success in transforming the economic environment for small firms has been further reinforced through the efforts of employer-led, locally based training and enterprise councils and by the recently announced seven-point package of measures to help small firms and enterprise.

Mr. Nicholson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that good news and for the justifiable concern that he expressed earlier about late payment of debt. He will be aware that there is still a problem in my constituency and the south-west with the burden of the business rate, but is not the last thing that small businesses want the layers of bureaucracy that would result from 10 new regional assemblies, new sex and race discrimination legislation and the hundreds of new quangos that Labour would put into practice in its first year of office?

Mr. Forth: We shall draw the attention of the business community, especially small businesses, which are such an important part of the economy in my hon. Friend's part of the world, to the policies being espoused by the Labour party and make some estimate—if the Labour party will not do so, we certainly will—of the real burdens that they would place on business and the devastating impact that they would have on self-employment and employment throughout the country.

Mr. Haynes: Mr. Speaker, Sir, ever since this Minister filled his predecessor's boots, he has been talking a load of rubbish. His party and that lot behind him have crucified small businesses, and the end result is the loss of many jobs. He wants to get out of that office, get out into the areas, find out what is going on and do something about the problem, or I will kick his backside for him.

Mr. Forth: One of the great regrets, I am sure, of all hon. Members is that because the hon. Gentleman has chosen to leave us at the next election he will never have the opportunity to be a junior Minister. Had he been one, he would know that a large part of the duties of anyone holding my office is to meet business men and their

representatives to discuss their problems and concerns. My colleagues and I spend much time doing that. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are fully aware of the difficulties of the business community and that we shall continue to listen carefully and to tailor our policies to its needs. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could persuade his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench to do the same.

Wage Levels

12. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations from the Confederation of British Industry concerning wage levels.

Mr. Howard: I have received no formal representations from the CBI, but I am aware of its view that pay settlements need to be more realistic if competitiveness is not to be damaged.

Mr. Lord: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Labour's proposals for a national minimum wage may seem superficially attractive but would be deeply damaging to business, particularly small business, and to job prospects?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend, and so does every independent study and assessment that has been made of this matter. As the Leader of the Opposition has joined us, perhaps he will use his influence on the four members of his party who voted last week to cover up the truth by refusing to permit the Select Committee on Employment to conduct an investigation into the true consequences of a national minimum wage.

Mr. Leighton: Is it not the case that although the wage increases of British workers have come down the benefits of that have been dissipated, and that due to the recession induced by the Government productivity has gone down although it has gone up in Germany and as a result unit labour costs in the year to the second quarter of 1991 went up by 3 per cent. in Germany but by 11 per cent. in this country? With a fixed exchange rate, has not this country badly lost competitiveness?

Mr. Howard: It was the hon. Gentleman's casting vote as Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment which last week prevented that Committee from looking into the truth of these matters. If he had been seriously concerned about the competitiveness of British industry, he would have welcomed that inquiry and not blocked it.

Autumn Statement

13. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on how he proposes to spend the additional resources announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Howard: The additional resources planned will be directed towards helping unemployed people, improving the skills of the work force and assisting small businesses and enterprise.

Mr. Hind: Will my right hon. and learned Friend contrast the £500 million that he has added to his Department's budget and last month's fall in unemployment in Merseyside, Lancashire and Cheshire with the squabbling of the Opposition Front Bench, which cannot decide whether employment and training are priorities in their programme?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that matter. The last time the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) expressed his concerns, he gave a list of our programmes which he said were to be destroyed and eliminated. In fact, they will all be maintained and will play an increasingly important role in helping unemployed people.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hughes: Can the Prime Minister remember those heady, happy days a year ago when his predecessor was tossed out of office? Now that his policies, the economy and everything around is in disarray, and with the right hon. Lady making a comeback, who will be the first to put him out of his misery in Downing street—the people at the election or his right hon. Friend?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has clearly not observed that in the last year inflation has fallen to 4 per cent. and the interest rate to 10·5 per cent., the tax burden on business has been lightened, there is a pay review body for teachers and better standards and choice for parents—all of which were opposed by the Labour party. When the time comes, the hon. Gentleman will have the pleasure—if he holds his seat—of staying on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the comment made on Sunday that we should not commit ourselves now in advance of 1997 to a single currency as a point of agreement that all sensible people could hold? Will he contrast that with the words of the Leader of the Opposition to the effect that Labour would sign up to a single currency now, irrevocably?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. That was certainly the view of the right hon. Gentleman in the debate last week, but it was flatly contradicted by his right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Chancellor on television at the weekend. Of course, he did say that not committing ourselves to a single currency was the point of agreement that "all sensible people" would have.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister still take the view, as he told the House last Thursday, that he has the full support of his predecessor?

The Prime Minister: My predecessor supported me in the Lobby last week, as did the vast majority of the House.

Mr. Kinnock: That answer demonstrates just how hollow was the vote for the right hon. Gentleman last

Thursday night. Does the Prime Minister not remember saying just a year ago on the steps of Downing street that the Conservative party was

"fully united for the future"

and is that not patently false now when, in the approach to the vital meeting at Maastricht, the Tory party is in a state of open warfare?

The Prime Minister: It is within the recollection of the House that there were around 28 Labour abstentions in the Division last week. We also know from the honest remarks of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that around two fifths of the Labour party opposed its Front Bench's policy on Europe.

Sir John Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this is the first time that I have asked him a question since his appointment, and I intend to enjoy it? Is he further aware that he carries the good wishes of the party behind him in the difficult few months to come and should go to the talks in great confidence, knowing of the great contribution that this country has made to Europe since the days of William Pitt?

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman get on with it, please?

Sir John Stokes: Does my right hon. Friend realise that in dealing with things that we hold so dear we want to make sure that the European Community gives us a good bargain and that what we give to it will be given back to us?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am pleased to be in a position to answer his question. He is entirely right about the British contribution to Europe, both in the long term and in the past few years when much of the present shape of the Community has arisen from initiatives by this country. We can play a role in developing Europe or we can turn our backs on the Community. By turning our backs, we would forfeit our right to influence what happens in the Community and I am not prepared to do that.

Mr. Ashdown: As the Prime Minister approaches the first anniversary of his move into his new home, will he spare a thought for the tens of thousands who, because of his policies, are now losing theirs? Does he realise that mortgage repossessions were 16,000 in 1989 and 44,000 last year, and that this year they are predicted to rise to 120,000, or 1 per cent. of all mortgage holders? Does he realise that he cannot sit on the fence on this one, and what does he intend to do about it?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman should have noticed, a few days ago my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced further steps to help all those in receipt of income support who have mortgages. The right hon. Gentleman says that that helps nobody, but it costs £400 million a year, so it must help rather a lot of people.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend contrast the judicious, prudent and honourable way in which he and his right hon. Friends are negotiating in the European talks with the cynical sell-out proposed by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)?

The Prime Minister: It is the case that we have set out our position perfectly clearly so that our European partners know what is acceptable to the House and what is not. The Labour party's position is now perfectly clear. If somebody else in Europe wants it, it will sign up to it.

Q2. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eadie: Will the Prime Minister consider the abolition of standing charges to pensioners by the private monopolies? Does he agree that with the massive increases in salaries for those bodies' chairmen and the ridiculous spend on advertising that we are witnessing, those companies can well afford to drop the standing charges? Why does not the Prime Minister arrange to meet pensioners' representatives at No. 10 Downing street and listen to their powerful case on the matter?

The Prime Minister: The abolition of one or other of the energy standing charges has been a popular mission for many people for many years, but abolition would undoubtedly lead to a higher unit cost and as many of the most vulnerable people use the most electricity or the most fuel generally, they would in fact be net losers and not net beneficiaries.

Mr. Thornton: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the chairman, trustees and staff of the Aintree national health service hospital trust on the establishment of a new £7 million project that will give it the largest accident and emergency unit in Europe? Is that not the best possible example of how the Government's commitment to the NHS is working?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was not aware of that investment, but I very much welcome it. It shows the huge investment currently being made in the national health service and the excellent way in which many trusts are using the resources available to them.

Q3. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Turner: How does the Prime Minister justify sending his son to a private school where nearly £4,000 a year is spent on each child when at present half the children in Tory-run Cambridgeshire's secondary schools receive only half that amount and when that authority is currently reducing its budget by almost £2 million? [HON. MEMBERS: "What about choice?"] I ask that question in terms not of choice, but of equity for all children.

The Prime Minister: Our party believes in choice. I note yet again the Labour party's hostility to any persons exercising any choice in the interests of their family. I believe that millions of people in this country will acknowledge that there would be no choice for them if there were a Labour Government.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that the 1992 legislation does not come into force until 31 December 1992 and that the same is true of the 1986 Single European Act? Will he confirm to the

House, the country and the international community that he will then be in his second term as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to confirm that to my hon. Friend. One reason why that will be so is that we have a coherent approach to Europe, not one that changes every weekend.

Cyprus

Q4. **Mr. Cox** (Tooting): To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: I next plan to visit Cyprus for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1993.

Mr. Cox: As Cyprus is a Commonwealth country and we are one of the guarantor powers for that island, how does the Prime Minister justify the ongoing occupation of much of that island by the Turkish army? Against that background and the highly critical comments of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 8 October about the attitude and behaviour of Mr. Denktash, when will the Government—and the Prime Minister in particular—show some evidence of active involvement in the affairs of Cyprus for the benefit of both communities, Greek and Turkish? When does he intend to do that?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have had a number of meetings with President Vassiliou during the year and that I have already met Turkish Ministers, as has my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. We continue to give support to the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement. The United Nations is soon to resume discussions with both sides. I hope that sufficient progress can be made for the Secretary-General to convene an international meeting soon, as endorsed by a number of Security Council resolutions. We shall continue to do all that we can to resolve the problem.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm today that the Conservative Government are planning to spend more next year on local——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Cyprus.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Prime Minister agree with his right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who said on Friday

"We are not accepting the principle of a single currency"

— yes or no, please?

The Prime Minister: It is entirely clear from the documents in front of us in the treaty that we are enabling ourselves to have the option to opt in. We are not committed to opting in by anything in either clause 2 or any later part of the treaty.

Q7. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any proposal to double the European Community structural funds will inevitably result in higher tax bills for the British taxpayer? Will he therefore assure the House that that proposal, which is supported by the Labour party, will be resisted most strenuously at Maastricht on the basis that one man's subsidy is another man's tax bill?

The Prime Minister: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance, although the issue is not directly on the table at Maastricht. We have made it clear that we see no case for a further massive increase in the structural funds. They are already substantial. They were doubled in real terms in 1987 over a five-year period. The contribution from some member states represents as large a share of gross domestic products as Marshall aid did after world war two.

Q8. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Has the Prime Minister had time to study the excellent article in the *Glasgow Herald* yesterday by the last Conservative leader of Glasgow district council, reflecting on the problems facing the Tory party in coming to terms with the need to give Scotland its own Parliament? If the Prime Minister gets a chance to read it, will he accept that it more accurately reflects the views of the people of Scotland than his Front Bench team does?

The Prime Minister: The strict answer is no, Sir, I have not yet studied that article, but in view of what the hon. Gentleman says I will most certainly do so. I do not believe that people in Scotland wish to break the Union. That is the direction in which the Labour party's policies are going.

Local Government Finance (England)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the local authority finance settlement for England for 1992-93.

I told the House on 23 July that, in the Government's view, local authorities in England will need to spend £41·8 billion in 1992-93. That is 7·2 per cent. up on the equivalent figure this year. Central Government will distribute £33·1 billion in support of that expenditure. That also is up by 7·2 per cent. Today I am issuing a consultation paper setting out how we propose to distribute those totals.

As I announced on 6 November, the business rate multiplier next year will be 40·2p. This is in line with the annual increase in the retail prices index to September of 4·1 per cent. The total burden on businesses would have been £600 million, or 5 per cent., higher if the business rates had continued to rise in line with local authority spending.

I propose to set the distributable amount of non-domestic rates at £12·3 billion. We will continue to pass on all receipts from business ratepayers to local authorities to support their expenditure.

I will shortly be laying a draft order to increase the rate at which businesses gaining from the introduction of the uniform business rate and the 1990 revaluation receive the benefits of the new system. The effect will be to release £100 million to the benefit of about 150,000 ratepayers, typically in manufacturing industry in the north and midlands.

I propose to pay nearly £309 million in area protection grant. That will continue to provide help to those areas where introduction of the community charge would have otherwise resulted in an undue burden on charge payers. There will also be a grant of £50 million for education authorities in inner London to assist with overspending inherited from the Inner London education authority.

I also propose to pay a special grant of about £86 million to meet 75 per cent. of local authorities' costs, excluding capital spending, on preparing for the council tax. I recognise that these are exceptional costs which authorities would not otherwise need to incur. Accordingly, that special grant, which I propose to distribute on the basis of the number of domestic properties in each charging authority's area, with an adjustment to reflect the higher costs in London and the south-east, will be outside the settlement totals. I am today sending authorities an exemplification of that proposal.

I propose that the total of revenue support grant for 1992-93 will be just over £16·6 billion. In addition, about £3·8 billion of specific grants will be available. After allowing for specific grants, the total of standard assessments will increase by around 6·8 per cent.

The consultation paper issued today gives details of the proposed standard spending assessments for all authorities. In considering how SSAs should be calculated, I have been conscious of the need to maintain stability from one year to the next. I am, nevertheless, proposing some minor changes to improve the basis of distribution. There are three, in particular, which I should mention. First, we will use more recent data which have become available on overnight visitors and the information will be extended to include foreign visitors. Secondly, we will discontinue the adjustment in respect of revenue support for bus services in London. We have now devised a new methodology which removes the need for the separate adjustment. Thirdly, the counties have rightly pointed out that they have relatively less scope to generate interest receipts than other authorities. For next year we will, therefore, change our methodology so as to make separate assumptions about the ability of different classes of authority to generate interest receipts. Those changes are designed to deal with long-standing grievances from particular groups of authorities without introducing too much disruption to SSAs.

Under my proposals, the community charge for standard spending will be about £257. Efficient authorities should be able to set charges which are even lower. Actual charges, however, will depend on authorities's budgets and on their efficiency and determination in collecting the charge.

Many people will, of course, pay much less than £257 because of help through the community charge reduction scheme and the community charge benefits. Entitlement under the community charge reduction scheme will be based on the difference between the rates and this year's community charge; and people who moved home this year and lost their entitlement to a reduction may be able to qualify at their new address. The total value of the reduction scheme will be similar to this year—that is, about £1·1 billion.

I told the House on 23 July that if authorities did not budget sensibly next year, I would not hesitate to use my powers to curb excessive budgets or excessive increases in budget and to protect charge payers from the consequences.

I am today announcing my provisional criteria. As last year, I consider it reasonable to allow smaller increases for those authorities whose budgets are well above their SSAs. Where budgets are very substantially above SSA, as is the case for some authorities brought within capping for the first time following the abolition of the £15 million threshold, I intend to seek budget reductions. In such cases, I consider it right to expect the greatest reductions from those authorities whose budgets exceed SSA to the greatest extent. But in all cases I intend the reductions to be achievable, albeit demanding.

My intended criteria are therefore: any increase of more than 6·5 per cent. over the previous year's budget will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget over the authority's SSA.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard anything out of order.

Mr. Martlew: My point of order is this. Is it correct —[HON. MEMBERS: "Order."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. If a point of order is raised with me, I must hear what it is. Otherwise, I cannot rule.

Mr. Martlew: Is it correct that members of the press have been issued with a copy of the statement from the Secretary of State? I have just been to the Table Office, where it is not available to hon. Members. Is that not wrong? Does it not show a disregard for the House?

Mr. Speaker: I have no idea whether that is correct. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] Order. The whole House knows my view about this.

Mr. Heseltine: Any increase of more than 4·5 per cent. over the previous year's budget will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget over 5 per cent. above the authority's SSA; and any increase of more than 2·5 per cent. over the previous year's budget will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget over 10 per cent. above the authority's SSA.

In addition, I intend that any budget more than 12·5 per cent. above the SSA will be considered excessive, save that an authority will not be designated if its budget is 30 per cent. or less over SSA and is no more than that set for 1991-92; if its budget is 60 per cent. or less over SSA and is 5 per cent. or more below that set for 1991-92; or if its budget is 10 per cent. or more below that set for 1991-92.

In 1990-91 there was a de minimis provision allowing authorities budgeting only a small amount above the criteria for excessiveness not to be designated. In 1991-92 the criteria included a principle that no authority was to be designated if its budget was excessive by £10,000 or less. Local authorities should not assume that there will be any such proviso or principle for 1992-93.

I intend to make special provision for the particular circumstances of the inner London boroughs which still bear the cost of inherited overspending by the Inner London education authority, and for the City of London.

These criteria are necessarily provisional, as was the case with the criteria which the Government set out last November. When I come to make my decisions on capping, I will, of course, take into account all appropriate considerations. I have placed a paper in the Library and Vote Office setting out my intentions in detail and have sent a copy to local authorities.

The provisional criteria which I have announced are tough, but manageable. We are determined that all authorities should exercise expenditure restraint and use the very considerable extra resources we have made available to keep charges at reasonable levels. Well managed authorities will be able to achieve effective service provision with budgets at or below the level of the provisional criteria.

My proposals for local authority spending and for external support are fair and realistic. The rate of inflation now stands at 3·7 per cent. per annum. Local government cannot expect to stand apart from our determination to exert continuing downward pressure. Against that background, this settlement should enable authorities to deliver local services of the quality people expect and deserve, at a level of charge which they can afford.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham:) Does the Secretary of State recall in May last year castigating universal capping in an excellent article in *The Times*, when he said it would

"negate accountability and be an act of centralised political power outside our experiences. . . Local authorities should be free to set and account for their own budgets."?

Does the Secretary of State feel any sense of embarrasssment at so quickly abandoning that stance and introducing today precisely the universal capping that he rightly attacked just 18 months ago? Does he feel any embarrassment at further undermining what little remains of local government democracy by imposing through central Government a straitjacket which means that every local council budget henceforth is his budget, that every cut in services henceforth is his cut and that every poll tax bill be his bill? When those bills arrive in March and April of next year, every one will bear the Secretary of State's fingerprints.

Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the statement has been so long delayed and is three or four weeks later than in previous years? How is local government, already hard pressed by the horrendous problems of collecting the poll tax and the preparations for the council tax, to grapple with this further delay? Will it mean that the consultation period will be shorter, or will the final RSG settlement also be delayed, or both? Was the delay because of a defect in the computers or a defect in Ministers?

Does the Secretary of State recall his predecessor's admission that SSAs were fundamentally flawed and should be reformed? How does he respond to the Audit Commission's warning that

"The Government should not underestimate the lack of confidence in SSAs among local government politicians and professionals"?

Why are we stuck with an unfair system which, without any supporting evidence, concludes, for example, that it costs £857 per adult in Wigan for a standard level of service but 69 per cent. more, at £1,448, in Manchester? What confidence can there be in a system which does not include economic deprivation—surely a fundamental factor—but does include visitor nights and is now to be extended to include foreign visitors, something that can be considered only as a renewal of the Westminster benefit? How can local government trust an arbitrary and capricious system which measures the number of days when snow lies on the ground and concludes that Harrow, at 15·4 days, has more snow than Cumbria, at only 12·6?

Why, given the increase in the business rate, is £100 million less being distributed from the national business rate to local government than is the case this year? Is that yet another effect of the recession, or is there another explanation?

Does the Secretary of State expect the damaging cuts demanded by his capping criteria to be effected without any real impact on services or those who depend on them? Is Derwentside, for example, to be expected to make cuts worth 10 per cent. in cash terms and 17 per cent. in real terms, and is Tory-dominated Elmbridge to be expected to make cuts of 8 per cent. in cash terms and 15 per cent. in real terms, without deep and damaging consequences for services?

Has the right hon. Gentleman checked with the Home Office whether single-service police authorities can finance their Home Office-approved levels of police stablishment? If he does, he will be told that the answer is no.

Is the right hon. Gentleman's £257 prediction of the average poll tax not predicated on the same fanciful assumptions about 100 per cent. collection as earlier vitiated and equally over-optimistic predictions in the last few years? Is it not the same fairy-tale exercise as we saw in 1990 and 1991?

With this reminder that the poll tax is still alive—I was going to say, and well, but that would be a misrepresentation—and that the bills will arrive yet again next year, and with this abandonment by the Secretary of State of all principle in introducing universal capping, is this not yet another black day for local government? Our only consolation is that, for the Secretary of State, nemesis is close at hand.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asks me whether I feel any sense of embarrassment about the capping levels. I have given him the answer before. I believe that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was extremely generous in giving £140 per community charge person to lower the level of community charges. It seems to me absolutely essential to protect that benefit to the community charge payer, and I know of no other way to do it but to cap the local authorities which would otherwise spend it.

The question flowing from that lies in the fact that, if we do not cap, it is automatic that there would be approval from the hon. Gentleman for increases in expenditure. So I therefore want him to say how much authority he has from the shadow Chancellor for the increases in public expenditure that lie behind every question that he has asked me today. How much would it cost in extra community charge and in extra tax rates to add to the 59p in the pound with which we are already threatened by the Labour party?

We were then asked to listen to the case of the hard-pressed local authorities. It might be helpful if I tell the hon. Gentleman how hard pressed they really are. In 1980-81, the cash available for the financing of relevant grants and expenditure was £19,307 million. In 1991-92, it was £39,892 million. At 1991-92 constant prices, that is a 5 per cent. real-terms increase in the expenditure of local authorities, so there have not been cuts as the hon. Gentleman claims.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about bringing foreign visitors into the calculations of SSAs. If a local authority is confident and keen to attract tourists to its area, foreign visitors are just as attractive as domestic visitors. We have simply updated the calculations on the basis of later information available to us. All that is explored with my Department by the local authority working groups.

I confirm that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary fully supports the increase in expenditure on the police provided by the settlement, whereby it will be increased by 12·9 per cent. That will pay for the excess of 16,000 extra police officers who have come on to the establishment since the Government were elected, and the extra 1,000 police officers announced by my right hon. Friend recently.

When the hon. Gentleman asks so many questions about the changes in SSAs in one area as opposed to another, he should ask why it costs on average £255 more per person to deliver services under a Labour authority than it does under a Conservative authority. If one considers the whole of London, why does it cost a Labour authority £131 per person more to deliver services than it would cost a Conservative authority?

It is not just a London phenomenon. In every class of authority, voting Labour costs a large sum of money. In the shire districts, it costs £70 and in the metropolitan districts it costs £61 per community charge payer to vote Labour. Taking the whole of local government in aggregate, the cost of voting Labour in an area controlled by that party as opposed to the Conservative party is, on average, £83. The only lesson is that the Labour party is extravagant, profligate and totally uninterested in the benefits to its community charge payers. It is interested only in the Labour-dominated, trade union-restricted services, which it seems to want to increase regardless of cost.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have an important debate on further and higher education in Scotland later this afternoon, so I shall allow questions on the statement until 4.30. I hope to be able to call all hon. Members who wish to participate if they ask brief questions.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend explain why provision is made for local authorities with a history of overspending but not for local authorities with a history of underspending, which may have very expensive problems in rural areas, and extensive school networks and social services, to a level which cost far more than in the authorities which have a history of high spending?

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about the interests of his constituency. However, SSA methodology, like all previous methodologies for distributing grant from central Government, is discussed with great care by my Department with the working groups of the local authorities. A statistical analysis is carried out and formulae are arranged to bring about that distribution. The characteristic reaction of local authorities is that each of them and every class of them has been disadvantaged, but none of them can ever reach a formula which the others will accept.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): Does the Secretary of State agree that, now and in the next financial year, local authorities will be spending much money needlessly trying to collect the poll tax from people who can ill afford to pay it? Does he not accept the Government's responsibility for that? He has asked the local authorities to collect the council tax the following year, so is not now the time to say that the Government will pay the whole cost of the introduction of the new council tax? Does the Secretary of State agree that the percentage increases that he announced today do not cover such legislation as the Children Act 1989, the introduction of care in the community and the extra police officers announced by the Home Secretary? It is not much good the Government saying that police authorities may appoint police officers if the Government then stop them from doing so by capping the authorities.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should give 100 per cent. grants in such circumstances, because that would remove the authorities' incentive to deliver effective and cost-conscious services. As to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question on the collection of the community charge, I have looked into the matter. It is interesting to note that it is not necessarily Labour authorities that cannot collect the charge.

Of the top 10 community charge collection authorities last year, three were Labour: Cannock Chase collected 110 per cent. of its budget, Copeland collected 105 per cent. and Gateshead collected 104 per cent. The only conclusion to draw from that is that the authorities that do not collect their community charge are ineffective and inefficient.

That is why, if we consider the authorities with the worst record of collecting the charge, we find that in 1990-91 Labour had a clean sweep—the worst 10 authorities were all Labour-controlled. Of the 10 worst authorities in 1991-92, only nine are Labour, but the one clear characteristic of all the statistics is that the Labour

party is ineffective and inefficient in collecting its bills. If the worst Labour authorities had behaved like the best three, they would not have encountered a problem.

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Has my right hon. Friend any plans to help those charge payers who, perhaps because they were too young, were not rate payers, and who now derive no protection under the reduction scheme?

Mr. Heseltine: It is quite difficult to help people who were not paying a specific bill when the new system came into existence. We can only introduce schemes—we have done so on a generous basis—for those people whose bills suddenly increased from a lowish level to a much higher one. We have introduced transitional schemes for them. I do not think that we can introduce schemes to help people who never had a bill.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is not the Secretary of State's own bill far less than most people's, particularly in London, where, under the new council tax, he will pay less than people who occupy garages in eight London boroughs? Should he not have come to the House and said that he would make arrangements to help those who cannot pay the poll tax and are forced to pay the 20 per cent. minimum contribution? Should he not have said that he would get rid of the minimum 20 per cent. rule?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member will want to give us every help in getting the new council tax on to the statute book as quickly as possible, as it does exactly what he suggests.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the experience of my borough council, Reading, which is near his constituency, which blew all the reserves immediately the Labour party came into control by placing bollards all over the bloody town——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is inelegant, I think, for Reading.

Sir Anthony Durant: The bollards, which I shall not describe, were placed throughout the town. The council blew all its reserves and failed to collect the community charge, so that everyone has had to pay an extra £48 on their community charge this year because of the level of non-collection.

Mr. Heseltine: I very much sympathise with my hon. Friend and his constituents. I hope that, under the present regime, the local authority will collect the community charge and save a great deal of money for those who would otherwise have to pay excess bills.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): When the Secretary of State announced the figures today, he made it clear that he expected the extra expenditure to be used on reducing the charge—the poll tax—not increasing services. What proportion of SSAs to local authorities has been allocated for increased expenditure for the implementation of the Children Act 1989?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady will know that we never give specific breakdowns of individual figures, but she will also know that service increases are given. For example, the increase for personal social services is 7·7 per cent., education 7·1 per cent., police 10·9 per cent., fire and civil defence 8 per cent. and other services 9·2 per cent., with a total of 7·2 per cent.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, under the new regulations, there is no need for any local authority to be capped, even the most irrational Labour council, because new targets have been set and the councils are required to meet those new targets only from the current starting point?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We have clearly told local authorities where the capping regime could bite after consultation, and they now have plenty of time to adjust. It is important to make the point that, across the country, businesses, which pay vast sums of money towards local authorities, are having to make such adjustments all the time.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Will the Secretary of State explain why my local authority of Durham has an SSA which is half that of Hove, an authority similar in functions and population? Is it perhaps because Durham is Labour-controlled and Hove is Tory-controlled?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know full well that, in a statement such as this, we cannot look into the details of every one of the hundreds of authorities. However, all the information is available to him and to his local authority, and the answer will be because the methodology of the SSA system delivers the results that he has suggested, if those are in accord with the real world. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly able to write to my Department and seek any further clarification that he wants.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a council such as Derbyshire, which spends nearly £14 million a year pegging school meals to 1981 prices but which at the same time sacks hundreds of teachers and which has increased its work force by 8,000 in the past decade but cut the number of police, can have no credibility in its ritual whining about underfunding?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend puts his point with extreme eloquence, and I very much support the thrust of what he says.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the Secretary of State now prepared to meet the seven authorities which have wanted to meet him for months to discuss their problems with their SSAs? Will he now come off his high horse and meet those people rather than shove them on to his Minister of State?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will realise the pitfalls of responding favourably to a suggestion that the Secretary of State should receive a delegation, when there are still 28 minutes to go in which every other right hon. and hon. Member could make the same request. I can at least say that we meet delegations, we carefully consider all applications that are put to us, and there is no reason why his should automatically be turned down.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the best bits of news in his statement today was his announcement that the business rate increase would be kept to no more than the

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

rate of inflation in the coming period? What prospect is there that the Government will be able to go further than that in due course and reduce the rate of increase in the business rate, which bears hard on many new small businesses in my constituency and elsewhere?

Mr. Heseltine: I am aware that a strong body of opinion wants us to look at the matter again. My hon. Friend will realise that a revaluation is scheduled for, I think, 1995, which might address some of the problems. Another important part of the background is that, as the economy recovers, so the pressure on many of those businesses will be eased.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Is it not the case that the errors which have been apparent in previous SSAs have been repeated in this year's statement, in that the SSAs are still being calculated on the 1981 census data and many of the factors are simply irrelevant to local authorities such as my own?

Mr. Heseltine: I addressed that question earlier as fully as I could. The distribution of central finance is always a controversial issue, with arguments between individual authorities and classes of authority to the effect that it is unfair or does not provide what they want. That will be the case whatever system operates. The working parties presided over by my Department, but deeply involving of course local authorities and other Government Departments, consider all the evidence and try to reach agreement on a practical way forward. Ultimately, it falls to the Government to take decisions; otherwise, no decisions would be made.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent statement. Does he agree that nothing can excuse the wanton and vicious extravagance of so many Labour authorities, and that it is about time that the costs of non-collection were met by forcing local authorities to reduce their expenditure rather than imposing them on virtuous citizens who pay their community charge?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand my hon. Friend's indignation, which is widely shared throughout the country. Far and away the best solution would be for all local authorities to be determined to collect the proper entitlements of the bills they issue. That would enable many of them to deliver a far better service.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Is it not a fact that, under last year's standard spending assessment, Merton received only an 18 per cent. grant, the lowest in London, whereas Wandsworth received the highest, at 24 per cent.? Is that not repeated in this year's assessment, which reveals a similar divergence? Does that not prove that the Government are providing more funds to Tory-controlled authorities than to Labour authorities?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman selects his authorities carefully, and fails to point out that Lambeth and Hackney are at the top of the list of distributions. It has nothing to do with the unfortunate party political point that the hon. Gentleman seeks to make: it is a matter of trying to allocate resources according to the needs of individual authorities.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the problem of farm workers and others in tied accommodation, who do not pay any rates and who are thus ineligible for transitional relief?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand that difficulty, but my hon. Friend will appreciate that we are in the last year of the community charge. Also, a large number of people who let their properties on a service tenure to the individuals occupying them pay the consequential community charge, in the same way that they previously paid rates.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Given the Conservatives' claim to be the party of law and order, does the Secretary of State agree with Merseyside police authority that capping will cause the loss of 400 to 500 policemen on the beat in Merseyside?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will want to consult his authority in the light of today's announcement. One cannot escape the fact that more than 16,000 extra policemen have joined the establishment since this Government were elected, and a further 1,000 are to come as a result of the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. That cannot be construed as anything but a dramatic commitment by the Government to law and order.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Many of us felt that the old regional development grants were arbitrary and unfair to certain cities. Can my right hon. Friend illustrate by the figures that he has given today how the distribution of the unified business rate will operate more fairly and helpfully to the benefit of towns and cities in the north, such as that which I represent?

Mr. Heseltine: I am very interested by my hon. Friend's comment. I do not have to hand a breakdown of the distribution of the non-domestic rate, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome my statement that, because more was collected from the national business rate than was expected, we have been able to release the benefits —particularly to manufacturing industry in the north and the midlands. That has made available about £100 million more than expected, which will be shared by 190,000 ratepayers.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Although the right hon. Gentleman's own Department acknowledges that Wigan metropolitan borough provides services comparable, in terms of their value, to those offered by local authorities such as Wandsworth, again this year Wigan has a standard spending assessment of less than half that applying to comparable authorities. Is it not a disgrace how the SSA operates against the interests of local authorities that provide, in the words of the Secretary of State, value-for-money services? Should they not receive the same level of grant that authorities such as Wandsworth receive?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has returned to an issue that we have explored exhaustively. The fact is that local authorities do not agree among themselves on any alternative method of distributing central Government funds. Each class argues for more for itself, and, inevitably, each authority within each class argues for more for itself. In the end, someone must make a decision,

and, as central Government distribute the money, it is not surprising that the Secretary of State will present their proposals to the House.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): What consideration has my right hon. Friend given to the expense that is now being incurred by certain authorities with major ports of entry in their areas in connection with the care of refugees and asylum seekers?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has raised what I know to be an important and difficult issue. It is indeed a growing issue, which concerns us all. Within the standard spending assessments are indicators measuring social hardship and the incidence of social problems. They would, in part, impact on the difficulties that my hon. Friend has described.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Secretary of State the nerve to admit that, in the past two years, grants have been allocated to ensure that Tory flagships such as Wandsworth and Westminster are safe for Tory control, and that this year he has decided to fiddle the figures to save all the Tory marginals for the general election—or, at least, in an attempt to do so? Is it not ironic that a Cabinet Minister should be taking over the budgets of all the local authorities in Britain, while at the same time his Cabinet colleagues are handing power over the national Budget to the Common Market?

Mr. Heseltine: Some of us would rather see the Budget handed over to the Common Market than see it handed over to the hon. Gentleman's party. As long as my party remains in power, however, there is not the slightest chance of either the Common Market or the Labour party getting it.

Let me help the hon. Gentleman. He is trying to suggest that grant has been distributed in a "party" way. He must explain the fact that, over the past two years, total standard spending has increased by 27 per cent., and aggregate Exchequer finance produced by central Government by 43 per cent. There is no conceivable way in which that could be described as a party political allocation.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend must be aware that £50 of the £140 concession was swallowed up by the failure of many people to pay their community charge. In my Labour-controlled area, only £90 was returned.

A curious advertisement has been placed in the local papers, asking people to pay their community charge. Part of it states: "The Southampton Labour group does not agree with the poll tax"—and that is in the middle of an advertisement whose aim is to make people pay up. Does my right hon. Friend know about that, and does he know about the four pages that I have sent to his Department, which deal with wastefui products and wasteful propositions in Southampton? Will he ensure that Labour-controlled Southampton city council is scrutinised and capped?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend rightly feels strongly about the inability of some authorities to collect their community charge, while nevertheless spending large sums. It is, however, the democratic responsibility of local people to carry out checks. I have no power to intervene in the internal affairs of the local authorities; that is a matter for the local democratic process or, as a last resort, for the Audit Commission.

Mr. Martlew: How can the Minister justify asking Carlisle city council to reduce its budget by £400,000 when Government spending is out of control? Carlisle is probably one of the best district councils in the country. That was acknowledged by the Minister, who recently appointed its very able leader to the Audit Commission. How can we expect the Secretary of State, sitting in Whitehall, to know what is best for the people of Carlisle? Time and time again, they have democratically elected a Labour council. When will the Secretary of State give democracy back to the people?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will realise that, having given £140 per community charge payer to the people, it is my responsibility to protect that generosity by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to ensure that it is not mopped up by the extravagance of local authorities.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I know that the subject has already been raised once before, but it is so important that I want to ask my right hon. Friend whether there is any possibility of the Government reviewing the step-by-step increases in the business rate for small businesses. These large increases are putting many small businesses, not only in my constituency but throughout the country, in a very difficult situation.

Mr. Heseltine: I understand the strong feelings of my hon. Friend and many other hon. Members. The situation has undoubtedly proved much more difficult because of the strain of the economy on small businesses. I very much hope that, as the economy recovers, as it is now beginning to do, that pressure will ease. My hon. Friend knows that small businesses are protected from excessive increases by the limits that we have introduced. That is the limit of what we are able to do.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, because of the rules changes that he has instituted, some local authorities could have to make cuts of up to 10 per cent.? Derwentside is one example. The Secretary of State says that there is a need for stability. Is there not a case, therefore, for looking at those local authorities where the impact has been exceptional?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that, in the capping regime that I announced, we recognised that there was a limit to the speed at which we could expect change to come about. We have said that, when local authorities begin the process of adjustment, there is a point beyond which, in a given year, no further pressure will be exerted. However, to become an overspender on the scale of some authorities means that money is being spent on a dramatically larger scale than by equivalent authorities providing similar services.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Did I mishear my right hon. Friend? Did he say that the rules for people who qualify for rebate may be changed if they move house? If so, will he elaborate? Nothing causes more ill feeling and resentment in my patch than the fact that people lose their right to rebate solely because they move house.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will find that, where people have moved, there are some opportunities for them to claim rebate. I should be happy to look into the cases of any specific constituents if my hon. Friend would care to write to me.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): First, why was it absolutely necessary for this statement on English business to be made today, before the debate on Second Reading of the only Scottish Bill this Session? Secondly, will the right hon. Gentleman explain, given the fact that he is the string that pulls the Secretary of State for Scotland on these matters, how the business alleviation that he proposes will compensate businesses for the inflationary and recessionary consequences of the 2·5 per cent. increase in VAT that he was responsible for imposing on businesses in the first place?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is confusing many different issues. We arranged to make this statement now in order to give local authorities plenty of time. There is always, as the hon. Gentleman knows and as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House constantly explains, pressure for time on the Floor of the House. I must therefore leave it to my right hon. Friend to determine the appropriate moment at which I should make a statement.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I must tell my right hon. Friend that, in my experience, Liberal Democrat-run councils are every bit as incompetent as Labour-run councils. I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. The level of grant to local authorities is considerably higher than the rate of inflation. More particularly, I welcome his statement about the inclusion of visitor nights in the standard spending assessment methodology. That will help many authorities. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for having listened to the representations that were put to him.

Mr. Heseltine: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. This has been a source of controversy with local authorities, but we now have more up-to-date information. The previous information stretched back to the early 1970s. We have been able to help significantly, but I am only too well aware that, when we have done so, the authorities that have lost have complained that we have switched to an unacceptable new system, although I have no doubt that it is a better one.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): What account has the Secretary of State taken of the representations that Staffordshire made to the Department of Health, which we understood would be relayed to the Department of the Environment? What is his advice to parents whose children live in Staffordshire's residential homes or homes for the mentally and physically handicapped, which need £19 million to bring them up to the standards laid down following pindown and the Utting report? Does not Staffordshire's standard spending assessment mean that the county will be nowhere near able to meet its statutory responsibilities?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady will know that we consulted on the matters that I have announced today. The capping regimes are essentially a consultative process. The working parties that my Department organises include representatives of local authorities and of the Department of Health. The information to which she drew our attention will have been considered by all the people concerned. That is not the end of the story—there is still a chance for it to happen—but it is fair to point out that a range of other authorities will have their own views on why they should be given more money, which is always to be found at somebody else's expense.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that one of the worst examples of overspending must have been the unlamented Inner London education authority. He said again today that he has had to compensate the new inner-London education authorities. In considering the figures, has he found that Conservative-controlled authorities—Westminster, Wandsworth and Kensington and Chelsea—have moved much faster and more efficiently in cutting overspending than Labour-controlled authorities?

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): That is a difficult question.

Mr. Heseltine: No, it is not difficult at all. I cannot entirely accept my hon. Friend's suggestion that the Inner London education authority was the worst of the authorities that we got rid of: I always thought that the GLC was a close competitor for that claim. However, we got rid of both, which is a help.

All I can do is point to the stark contrast between the community charge bills of Labour and Conservative authorities in inner London. The figures are quite startling. The average community charge of an inner-London Conservative authority is £98. Under a Labour authority, it is £353—a cost of £255 per community charge payer for voting Labour.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does the Secretary of State agree that education is critical to breaking the cycle of deprivation? Will he therefore ensure that the additional £50 million for inner-London education is spent on inner-London education?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. We are compensating London boroughs for ILEA's excess costs to enable them to adjust over a phased programme. That is the purpose of the £50 million.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a matter for congratulation that he has announced today a real-terms increase in local authority spending? Nevertheless, does he accept that real choices will have to be made by local authorities and that it would have been dishonest to announce a catalogue of spending promises when perhaps he had failed to obtain the extra money from Treasury colleagues and had privately briefed councillors that that spending could not be made? Have not we discovered from today's newspapers that that is what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has been doing? Is not that dishonest, and totally typical of him?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That word will have to be withdrawn. The term "dishonest" is not to be applied to hon. Members.

Mr. Hughes: I replace it with "an unlikely proposition".

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right to say that the total standard spend will rise by 7·2 per cent. next year, whereas inflation is currently running at 3·7 per cent. Therefore, as far as one can forecast, that is likely to be a real-terms increase in local authority expenditure

consistent with the pattern throughout the 1980s of a 5 per cent. real-terms increase in expenditure. However, every time the settlement is announced to the House, one hears endlessly from the Opposition about cuts. In the real world, there has been a 5 per cent. increase.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why can we not have a fundamental review of the standard spending assessment, which is the second great evil of the poll tax? Of 296 non-metropolitan districts, North-East Derbyshire finishes 295th in terms of standard spending assessment per poll tax payer, but the people of north-east Derbyshire are not filthy rich, so there is clearly something very peculiar about the formula. Even at this stage, they are being asked to pay 30 per cent. of the total standing spending assessment out of the poll tax moneys, although, at the beginning of the poll tax, we were told that only 25 per cent. would have to be raised in that way. Since then, there have been massive increases in value added tax. As we know——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Barnes: As we know something about these matters in North-East Derbyshire, could we—like my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and his constituents—meet the Minister?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member fulfils my expectations. I realise that, if I were as generous to the hon. Gentleman as it is in my nature to be, it would be only a matter of time before other colleagues sought to expose that weakness in my character and to obtain extra meetings. We do meet delegations—although not from every hon. Member—but if the hon. Gentleman cares to make a submission, we shall consider it carefully.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): Would my right hon. Friend reconsider the position of people who become 18 after 1 April? Surely it does not make sense for such a person to pay more community charge than the parents with whom he lives?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand the circumstances that my hon. Friend outlines, but I do not wish to leave any doubt. We shall not be able to reconsider the matter in the context of the last settlement for the community charge. We have considered so many exemptions and have helped so many people that we must now proceed with the settlement and recognise that it will be the last one.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Why does the Secretary of State not admit that, after 13 years of fiddling with grant-related expenditure assessments, with standard spending assessments and with the whole system of local government finance, he still does not have a system that he can prove is fair? Does he not agree that most people would say, neutrally, that the Government are anti-local government and wholly incompetent and that it is time for a change and for fairness to be part of local government once again?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is largely right, which is why the council tax is coming.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On Saturday morning, I am to meet a group of 14 local head teachers, who have been led to believe by the local authority that there will be massive education cuts next year, which will increase the teacher-pupil ratio. What am I to tell those head teachers, and how can we be sure that the money sent to Rochdale and Oldham metropolitan borough councils will be spent on education, as some of it was intended to be?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will want to tell them that the increase in SSAs for education over 1991-92 will be 7·1 per cent.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In deciding on the assessment for Cumbria police, did the Secretary of State take into account the 52 per cent. increase in crime in West Cumbria? Does he understand that many of my constituents now live in fear? A couple of extra police officers on the streets of Workington will not begin to deal with that problem. Can he assure me that the problem will be sorted out in these assessments when calculations are made in the future?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary decides on establishment issues——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is not enough.

Mr. Heseltine: Then I ask him the question that I asked one of his colleagues: by how much extra is he authorised to commit the Labour party to increase expenditure on law and order? That is the sharp issue.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced a further increase in police establishment of 1,000 people, which is included in the figures that we have announced. That increase is in addition to the 16,500 who have joined the ranks since 1979.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend has made his statement with force and logic, which I welcome. However, how is it right that local authorities that have many tourists and overnight visitors will benefit from an augmented SSA, whereas local authorities such as Hillingdon, which have ports of entry to which many refugees come, especially unaccompanied refugee children who are a large burden on the social services and housing departments, do not get special provision?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend may have heard my reply a few moments ago. Those are different factors within the SSA mechanism. One is dealt with by social indicators, whereas the other is dealt with by having regard to the number of visitors, bearing in mind the fact that one is dealing with tourist authorities. I ask my hon. Friend to understand that distinctions are drawn in that way. I am not unsympathetic to his point, but I point out that there is a far wider issue about the number of people coming to this country illegally who are seeking asylum and who are a potential cost to the local authority. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has addressed the matter recently in the House, and doubtless he will continue to do so.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend has said that this is a consultative document. He has also said that the £15 million rule comes in, whereby councils such as South Bedfordshire district council could be capped. Will he consider its position sympathetically? It is an authority that lost money in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, and it is in a state of anxiety. May I have an assurance that it will be

[Mr. David Madel]

some weeks before my right hon. Friend takes a final decision about whether South Bedfordshire should be capped?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will know that, by statute, I am bound to listen to all arguments that are put to me. I assure him that I will do that, although I cannot say what my conclusion will be after those representations. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend's authority will wish to put its point.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at authorities such as Lancashire, with a spending budget of £1 billion? If such authorities are obliged to make reductions in expenditure, will he ensure that they do not make them in the areas that are the most painful and that will attract the most publicity? I have in mind especially statements of educational needs and the number of policemen. Would my right hon. Friend consider ring-fencing the police budget to ensure that that does not happen?

Mr. Heseltine: It would be an extraordinarily cynical and reprehensible way for a local authority to behave, and I very much hope that we shall not see examples of it. It would not be appropriate for me to try to take legislative powers to ring-fence individual programmes of local authorities in the circumstances that my hon. Friend has outlined, although I very much share his anxiety.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Have we not heard this afternoon a new definition of a Tory Euro-enthusiast—one who would rather have our money directed by the Germans and French than by a democratically elected Labour Government?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, having encouraged local authorities to bid for city challenge, expenditure generated locally to meet that next year will be subject to the capping rules, and that expenditure that has to be raised and spent locally over and above any central Government grant for the introduction of the council tax will be subject to capping? Will not the real victims of capping be children in schools and the elderly in need of social services?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I reject both the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. I must confess that I looked in the eye of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and thought of him running this country. Perhaps even my imagination was carried away by the idea that he should govern us in any circumstances. I can think of nothing worse than such a horror scenario.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) will be as aware as I am that the city challenge arrangements have been carefully considered by my Department and that the urban grant arrangements will be dealt with in the way that I was able to announce very recently. Only 10 per cent. of them will count within the revenue of the local authority, so there is considerable assistance, in that we have increased the disallowance to 90 per cent. There are similar and helpful arrangements for the capital programmes also. The issue of city challenge has been dealt with sympathetically, and I am delighted that it has.

Points of Order

3.25 pm

Several Hon. Members On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I shall take points of order, but will hon. Members please bear in mind the fact that there is to be an important Scottish debate in which many hon. Members wish to participate?

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could you please inform the House whether the Secretary of State for Scotland has given notice that he intends to make an oral statement to the House this week about the three applications for self-governing trust status from three Scottish hospitals? I have a constituency interest because one, the Royal Scottish National hospital, is based in my constituency. The Minister of State who has responsibility for health matters in Scotland is on public record as saying that the Secretary of State would make a public announcement before the end of this month. If there is to be a parliamentary announcement, that leaves only today and tomorrow, bearing in mind the fact that, on Fridays, most hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies will be back at work in their constituencies.

Therefore, I ask you, Mr. Speaker to try to ensure that the Secretary of State comes to the House to make an oral statement, because this place is already rife with suggestions that there may simply be a statement to the media with or without a reply to a planted written question, which would be completely unacceptable in terms of parliamentary accountability. Will you, Mr. Speaker, try to ensure that we have an opportunity to question the Secretary of State on this important matter either today or tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the whole House know that it is not up to me to require a statement to be made to the House. I have a rather different function. However, as the Secretary of State for Scotland is on the Treasury Bench, I am sure that he will have heard what has been said.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I should like to seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on how, in the light of the point that has just been made, hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies can get Ministers to treat the principle of their accountability to the House of Commons with some degree of respect. They tell us that the House of Commons adequately serves the interests of the people of Scotland, but they make statements outside the House.

We have a Second Reading later today of a Scottish Bill, but two other Bills that are being considered in Committee at the moment, on the council tax and the schools tax, relate to Scotland and should be separate Scottish Bills, but they are not. We do not have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and can question that unaccountable bunch of Ministers only once a month. Is there anything that you can do, Mr. Speaker, to try to ensure that Ministers are effectively brought to account in the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order for me. The arrangement of business is a matter for the Government and the usual channels. It is not my responsibility.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): May I be allowed to remind you, Mr. Speaker, of two of the replies given to the House earlier today by the Secretary of State for Employment? Not once but three times, the right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly sought to interfere with the way in which the Select Committee on Employment deals with its business. On the third occasion, the right hon. and learned Gentleman actually invited the Leader of the Opposition to advise the Labour members of that Committee.

Do you agree, Mr. Speaker, that Select Committees are, by their very nature, Back-Bench Committees and that their role is to scrutinise the work of the Executive? Therefore, would it not be outrageous if any Minister or, for that matter, any Leader of the Opposition—I am sure that my right hon. Friend is too wise to do this—should seek to interfere with the work of the Select Committees? Might we, as a House, be encouraged to tell the Secretary of State to keep his paws out of the work of the Select Committees?

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Is it really further to it?

Mr. Cook *indicated assent.*

Mr. Speaker: Very well; I shall deal with it.

Mr. Cook: It is further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, because my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) anticipated the point of order that I was seeking to raise with you. Further to what he has said, do you agree that for a Select Committee to have decided to ponder the proposals of an Opposition should they achieve power after the next election would be an abuse of parliamentary resources and parliamentary time?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for what goes on in Select Committees——

Mr. Tom Clarke: Oh yes, you are.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it is not a matter of order here—*[Interruption.]* No, it is not. It is not a matter of order in the Chamber. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has stated the factual position. Select Committees are independent and consist of Back-Bench Members. This is a matter for them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter which I was unable to raise with you earlier, and request a statement. A serious matter has come to my notice at the Christiana Hartley maternity hospital in Southport, where there has been an unfortunate disposal of foetuses from aborted children, to which the staff have objected. I wonder whether I may seek your indulgence to request a statement from the Secretary of State for Health on that most important matter.

Mr. Speaker: Again, that is a matter for the Secretary of State for Health. There is an Adjournment debate on that very subject tonight, and if the hon. Member is present, he may be able to participate in it.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Has the Secretary of State for Health said whether he intends to make a statement to the House on the leaked documents about the trusts? You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, of the great interest in the matter and that one national newspaper is on the verge of naming the American——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the hon. Lady knows, that matter is before the Privileges Committee. We cannot pre-empt anything that it will decide about the matter. The matter should not be raised on the Floor of the House now.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any indication whatever that the Attorney-General intends to make a statement to the House on the decision by the European Court of Human Rights? The Government have lost an important case. They tried to stop three newspapers publishing extracts from "Spycatcher". The European Court has ruled that the Government were wrong and has awarded costs against the Government.

On several occasions, Mr. Speaker, you have deprecated the discussion of matters outside the House—obviously this matter will receive much comment—while the House of Commons does not have the opportunity to debate them. Much money has been spent out of public funds, and this sorry saga has continued for six years. Surely the Attorney-General should come here today or on Wednesday and make a statement about how much money the Government have spent on the case, and why they decided to involve themselves in this farce in the first place, and to give Members of Parliament the opportunity to give their views.

Mr. Speaker: All the points of order raised with me this afternoon have been matters which are the responsibility of the Government. They are not my responsibility. I can, therefore, only repeat what I have already said in reply to previous points of order. The point that the hon. Gentleman raises is a matter for the Government. I am sure that it will have been heard by them.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the four motions on statutory instruments.

Motion made and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 6) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 2583) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Amendment Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1680) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Electricity (Non-Fossil Fuel Sources) (England and Wales) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 2490) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Designated Countries and Territories) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill builds on one of the Government's greatest but least acknowledged successes—the explosion of opportunity that we have triggered in further and higher education. The Government are strongly committed to the principle that places in higher and further education should be available to all those who wish to take up the opportunities and are able to benefit from them. The proposals in the Bill underline that strong commitment by improving further the quality and quantity of Scottish further and higher education.

The Bill is also the latest of many examples of our determination to break down the barriers to opportunity which remain in our society. The Bill contains proposals to abolish the completely artificial binary line, which has outlived its usefulness. We are also determined to take away the misplaced distinction between a vocational and an academic education. We shall sweep away those outdated barriers to progress. I have no doubt that, as a result, the traditional Scottish dream of opportunity for all is closer than ever to fulfilment.

As we embark on the European single market in 1993, it is imperative that that dream of opportunity for all is made real. There is no doubt that our economic well-being will depend more than ever on a well-educated population enjoying the opportunity of access to education from which everyone can benefit. As our colleges and universities continue to broaden their horizons to Europe and beyond, Scotland and her people will benefit from those reforms. It is no longer a question of matching the best in Britain. Our universities and colleges must match the best in Europe and the world.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Secretary of State speaks about a dream of opportunity for all and, of course, some aspects of the Bill will be broadly welcome, but how can he speak about genuine opportunity for all students when his Government are pursuing the student loans system, which is causing grievous hardship throughout Scottish academic institutions?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. The student loans system gives to the student the advantage of an extra source of funding on favourable terms. That enables him to have more resources at his disposal. Indeed, the resources available to students have increased in the past two years by about 25 per cent.—substantially more than the rate of inflation—as a result of the provision of student loans.

In seeking to match the best in Europe and the world, universities and colleges must maintain and, where necessary, improve standards. The further expansion of education to which we are giving the go-ahead will not lead to a dilution of quality and standards. Quite the reverse. The opportunities and flexibility that we are giving to universities and colleges should make standards improve still further.

Moreover, education enjoys an intrinsic value which goes far beyond the workplace and enables individuals better to fulfil their potential and make a worthwhile contribution as citizens. It is the ladder of opportunity to which everyone must have access, and I am determined that everyone will.

The Bill gives effect to the plans for the reorganisation of further and higher education contained in the White Papers "Access and Opportunity" and "Higher Education: A New Framework", which were published earlier this year. Those White Papers were widely acclaimed by all the institutions affected. They marked a watershed in Scottish education. The new flexibility and opportunities for development that they will give to our further and higher education institutions will be vital in enabling them to develop and progress to meet the needs of the 21st century.

It is significant that the proposals deal with both further and higher education. Too often, further education is dismissed as being of low status compared with higher education. We aim to change that by setting further education colleges free and establishing them as self-governing bodies. Never again will anyone see further education colleges as second rate.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On what basis does the Secretary of State imply that further education colleges are currently classed as second rate? What evidence does he have that their administration by local authorities has been detrimental to the integration of education in Scotland? Is not there a danger that by taking FE colleges away from local authorities the link between schools and further education, which is an essential component of integrated education planning, will be broken?

Mr. Lang: I agree that it is important to maintain the link to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I am certain that we shall achieve that, but I am equally certain that by creating the councils that we have set up and developing the opportunity for further education colleges to be run by councils manned by, among others, local business men, we shall create a new momentum and a new relevance of further education colleges to the needs of the area and its employers.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The point made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) about integrated education is important. At present, further education colleges are part of an integrated system. When dealing with young pupils with special learning needs, colleges can work alongside social work departments and others, but when the colleges are let loose, that integrated approach will go. The focus of further education colleges could change markedly towards vocational training. Therefore, the needs of those with special learning difficulties could be devalued. The Secretary of State should address that point.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has identified a point that is worth addressing. He is right to raise it. I am confident that the new arrangement whereby college councils run further education colleges will take into account the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. As a result the colleges will work closely with local authorities.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lang: Yes, but then I must press on.

Dr. Hampson: I am sure that the relationship between local authorities and colleges has improved since the days when I lectured in Edinburgh. I remember when I came into the House hearing the same problem highlighted in the English system by the then Secretary of State, Shirley Williams. The fact that the schools and FE colleges were under the same local authority did not guarantee any close relationship. In a circular, she even required FE colleges to inform schools of their addresses, so bad was the relationship.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks from considerable personal experience.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: No, not at this stage. I will give way to the hon. Lady shortly.

Part I of the Bill sets out a framework which will enable the further education colleges to work for the first time within a national overview of provision, within which broad strategies can be set, but which allows the maximum delegation to colleges to take quick decisions at local level better to meet the needs of their students and employers.

We aim to place further education colleges on as similar a footing as possible, setting a clear national framework for funding to replace the policies of 12 education authorities. That is not nationalisation, as critics have suggested; nor is it centralisation. It is a means to ensure that maximum devolution of responsibility within an overall coherent strategy—something which further education has hitherto lacked.

Clause 1 of the Bill gives the Secretary of State a new duty to secure that adequate and efficient provision of further education, which is defined in clause 6. That goes wider than vocational education—important though that is—and includes areas such as access courses to higher education, which open up opportunities for adults to return to education.

Further education colleges have already done much to support that type of course, through the innovative and successful Scottish wider access programme, which we instigated. We shall continue to attach priority to that.

Education authorities will retain a duty for community education. That is important, because concern has been expressed—much of it misconceived—about the future of adult education. Let there be no misunderstanding: we remain fully committed to education for adults. Our proposals aim to increase access and opportunity for school leavers and for adults.

I recognise that further education colleges are important providers of a wide range of courses for adults and that vocational courses and highers for adults are provided outside colleges. That diversity of provision has grown to meet the needs of local communities and it is desirable.

Clause 2 accordingly provides education authorities with the power to provide courses of further education, falling within the definition of clause 6. The Secretary of State will likewise have the power, under clause 4, to fund college boards of management in providing community education.

To safeguard the existing level of provision I have decided that the Secretary of State will fund further education colleges on the basis of the full range of programmes that they offer at present. Education authorities will be funded through the aggregate external finance settlement to provide further education outwith colleges, including community education. That approach is equitable and will allow planning to proceed in those areas, with certainty of funding. It will be for education authorities to decide in what circumstances to offer vocational education and highers. In funding the colleges for community education, the aim will be not to expand overall the current level of provision or to duplicate education authority provision.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): As the Secretary of State is talking about finance, can he explain why, since it is possible to identify colleges and to move those on, it is not possible to move on debt charges too? Does he not agree with at least one convener of education, who said that that is like taking away someone's house and asking them to pay the mortgage?

Mr. Lang: That is not a valid comparison. The debt charges are already totally absorbed and would be almost impossible to separate from other debt charges incurred by local authorities.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): May I inform the Secretary of State that debt charges for colleges of further education in Scotland are £86 million?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Clause 8 and schedule 1 provide for the duties, powers, composition and proceedings of the boards of management. Underlying those provisions is the principle that it is important to bring into colleges people who are involved with local industry and local affairs. By harnessing their talents, we can ensure that colleges are well managed. I make no apology for the majority of the board being constituted of people with practical experience. The majority of students attend further education colleges because they wish to equip themselves better for employment. The best way to ensure that colleges meet those aspirations is for local employers to be involved.

The new board, with a maximum size of 16, will be smaller than the present college councils, which have a maximum size of 20. The reduced size reflects the governing bodies' new responsibilities. They will be decision-making bodies, akin to the board of management of a company. That is balanced by the need for a range of people with different experiences to be involved. People will not merely be drawn from industry and commerce. In making appointments, regard will be paid to the position of education authorities. There will continue to be areas in which collaboration between education authorities and colleages will be for the benefit of both.

In carrying out their duties under clause 8, the boards of management will have to have regard to the provision of other education in their area. They can do so only by having a dialogue with education authorities and others. That will be important throughout the range of provision, not merely in education for 16 to 18-year-olds. For example, it should be borne in mind that about 62 per cent. of non-advanced students in further education are over the age of 18.

[Mr. Lang]

Colleage councils have given people valuable experience in administering delegated functions in colleges. In reconstituting college councils in the transitional period prior to April 1993, I shall aim for a measure of continuity in membership to draw on that experience. It is, therefore, nonsense to suggest, as some have, that because the first appointments will be made by the Secretary of State, boards of management will not represent local interests. I can give an undertaking that they will represent local interests in the same way that college councils do.

Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are the main asset of further education. On them depends the quality of education that the colleges provide. It is important that they should be in no doubt over their position and clause 11 provides for the automatic transfer of such staff. They will retain their existing pay and conditions of service, including superannuation rights, when they transfer. The negotiation of pay and conditions beyond 1 April 1993 will be a matter for boards of management, staff and their representatives to determine. The Government have no intention of interfering with that process; nor will I place any bar on a national framework being established, if that is the decision of those involved.

We aim to take steps between now and April 1993 to prepare staff for the colleges' new status. Newsletters will be produced keeping them informed of developments and training resources provided. I will also be looking to college boards of management to attach a higher and continuing priority to staff development generally. In addition, grants totalling £2·3 million will be made available to college councils in 1992-93 to enable them to prepare for their independence.

In Scotland we have a coherent vocational qualifications system. We aim to improve the status of those qualifications and the way in which they can be made more widely available. Interesting developments are taking place in areas such as the accreditation of prior learning, where knowledge of skills gained on the job can be given credit. That, together with open learning, can ensure that many more benefit from further education and open up new opportunities. Through our funding of the colleges we will aim to stimulate that flexibility.

Part II of the Bill gives effect to our proposed reforms of higher education set out in the White Paper "Higher Education: A New Framework". The Government are justly proud of what we have achieved in higher education in the past decade. Participation in higher education has soared. Numbers in full-time higher education in Scotland have increased by 40 per cent. and are now at record levels. Moreover, that success will continue in the future. We expect those numbers to increase by a further 60 per cent. by the end of the century. In addition, we expect that the participation rate of young Scots entering full-time higher education next year, 1992-93, will exceed 30 per cent. as compared to only 17 per cent. when we came to power. That means that we shall be close to meeting the target which the White Paper envisaged Great Britain achieving by the end of the century. In Scotland, we now expect that the participation rate will reach 46 per cent. by the year 2000. I suggest that that is an outstanding track record and it is one which I am determined to build on.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Can the Secretary of State say more about the future of Robert Gordon's institute of technology in Aberdeen? Is he aware that the mishandling of the matter by him and his Ministers caused a great deal of concern about its future among academics at the institution? Since the idea was floated during the Kincardine and Deeside by-election that RGIT would meet the criteria for changing into a university, and as nothing in the Bill defines how that will work out, can the Secretary of State give an absolute guarantee that RGIT will get the status that it so obviously deserves?

Mr. Lang: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman that guarantee yet, because we have only just put the criteria out for consultation. I do not anticipate that the consultation process, which will be completed shortly, will lead to much amendment of the criteria, certainly not to any extent that might debar Robert Gordon's institute of technology from qualifying. On the basis of the criteria as published, I am confident that it will qualify. Far from there having been any mishandling, my hon. Friend the Minister of State visited the institute recently and received warm approval for the way in which the Government have proceeded.

Mr. Hughes: There is no point in putting a subject out for consultation when the Minister absolutely refuses to see a deputation of Members of Parliament from the north-east of Scotland and bodies with a locus in education. What sort of consultation is that?

Mr. Lang: That was before we published the criteria. There was not much point in seeing a delegation for consultations on the criteria before they were published. They have now been published and they are subject to consultation. They should enable us to reach a decision on target, before the end of this year.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I give way, yet again, to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. Now that he has qualified the reply from the Minister of State, who said that there was no purpose in such a meeting, will he agree to meet the deputation as requested?

Mr. Lang: If the deputation thinks it appropriate to reapply, now that the consultation criteria have been published, its application will be considered in the usual way and an appropriate reply will be made. My hon. Friend met RGIT within the past few weeks. I am not sure what further there is for the institute to come and see him about.

Before turning to the detail of the provisions in part II, I should like to make some general points about the principles on which the policies are based. First, we have an important example of the Government's pursuit of devolved decision making and responsibility within the overall framework of the Union. The maintenance of that wider link is vital, particularly for the universities. The Committee of Scottish University Principals made that point forcefully to me at a meeting on 21 October. Any arrangements that inhibit the free interchange of staff, students and ideas between United Kingdom universities would, over time, have a significantly debilitating effect on our system of higher education and would be particularly

damaging in Scotland. The Government recognise those concerns, which is why our policies are set firmly in the United Kingdom context.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Clause 31(3) deals with the appointment of members to the funding council, which will be from 12 to 15 members strong. In the context of the reference to

"persons who appear . . . to have experience of . . . or . . . in . . . the provision of higher education",

will importance be given to research as well as the administration of higher education? Surely the Secretary of State appreciates that research is a most important element in higher education.

Mr. Lang: Yes, that is certainly an important point which will be borne in mind. Our purpose will be to approach this on a broad base. The hon. Gentleman's concern will be well covered.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: I must press on, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Douglas: Before dealing with the general issues and following the point made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), can the Secretary of State tell us whether the provision in schedule 6 that he will appoint the first chief executive to the funding council is on all fours with devolution? Will he desist from that appointment until he has other personnel in place? An important ingredient of the old University Grants Committee and the funding council was that they stood as a buffer between politicians and universities. How will that be preserved in the present context?

Mr. Lang: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern over the appointment of the chief executive. It is an extremely important appointment. The precedents are that the chairman and chief executive are appointed early. That is necessary to enable the organisation to get under way. I have already had discussions with the university principals about these matters. I am well aware of their views and have assured them that I will approach the matter carefully and cautiously. I recognise the supreme importance of high quality and a broad range of qualifications in all the appointments that we make to the council.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that we do not intend to use the snobbism of the word "university" to destroy colleges of excellence, such as Robert Gordon's, merely to enable them to enlarge an empire that is unsustainable and is not educational, as the new department of Edinburgh university announced today seems to do, when the university cannot even support the existing faculties?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend makes a valid and important point. I hope that those institutions that have achieved excellence in their present form will not, on achieving university status, abandon the basis of their excellence. Nor do I envisage that they, in large measure, will do so.

The second general point is that there is absolutely no need for any lack of confidence in our abilities either to provide or to administer higher education in Scotland. We have justified pride in our distinctive traditions. One city, Aberdeen, had as many universities as the whole of England and Wales for a period of 250 years. In more recent times, the focused and distinctive missions that our central institutions and colleges of education have developed have been an important component of the Scottish pattern of higher education provision—a pattern which has succeeded in sustaining our high and rapidly increasing rates of participation.

Clauses 31 to 37 establish the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and set out its composition and main functions. In general, these clauses mirror the equivalent provisions in the Education Reform Act 1988 for the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On clause 33, is the assessment committee to work in tandem with the English structure or is it to operate as a single council? What is the Secretary of State's reply to those vice-chancellors and principals who have said that if we are to have clause 33 there should be a national joint committee in certain areas, such as medicine, computing and engineering?

Mr. Lang: I would expect the Scottish council to keep in close touch with its counterparts south of the border. That is intrinsic in our approach to higher education. The councils may decide to form some joint committee and it would not be right for me to rule that in or out now. It is important that we can establish a coherent and self-contained council with the capacity to fund higher education in Scotland. In doing so, we should not lose sight of the vital cross-border links, so important to the continuing health and expansion of higher education.

I am pleased to announce to the House that Professor Jack Shaw has agreed to become the chairman and first member of the council. The appointment will commence on 1 April next year and run initially for three years. Naturally, it is subject to the necessary legislative authority. I am grateful to Professor Shaw for his thorough and timely response to my request to examine the criteria to be employed when institutions contemplate a merger. The Universities Funding Council's Scottish committee report on merger criteria was published yesterday and provides a well-researched and careful review. I know that higher education institutions have been keen to see the report and I am confident that it will become the standard reference for those with an interest.

I should make it clear, as does the report, that the initiative on collaboration lies with the institutions and that we generally favour a bottom-up approach to these matters. However, there may be circumstances where either a funding council or the Secretary of State needs to intervene and, again, the report recognises that.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Everyone will wish Professor Shaw well. Can the Secretary of State say a little about the basis of the appointment, in terms of the expectation of time? Obviously, Professor Shaw is a busy and successful man, particularly in the banking world. I am not clear on what basis the appointment has been made.

Mr. Lang: The appointment has been made on the basis that Professor Shaw feels able to devote the necessary time to the job. Given his present experience as chairman of the Scottish committee of the UFC, I think that he is an admirable appointee.

[Mr. Lang]

We are working to a challenging timetable. The council must be fully operational from 1 April 1993. It is important that the other members should be in place as soon as possible. Accordingly, the key appointment of chief executive will be advertised shortly. I hope to announce the appointments of the other members early in the new year.

Clause 33 deals with the important matter—

Mr. Douglas *rose*—

Mr. Lang: I am reliably informed that I have already given way 14 times. I had better get on.

Clause 33 deals with the important matter of quality assessment. Quality is a central element of our policy and we are determined that the great expansion of access to higher education that is now under way should continue to be achieved with no threat to standards. Whether one is concerned, like Robbins, with the pool of untapped talent, or like Amis, with the pool of tapped un-talent, is immaterial. The Government are determined that this time more shall not mean less, and we believe that this Bill, building on the experience of the last quarter of a century, gives us the mechanisms we need to secure that end.

The council will set up its own quality assessment unit to monitor and report on the quality of the education provided in our institutions. The unit will be staffed by the transfer of experienced personnel from Her Majesty's inspectorate and from the institutions. It will also draw on the resources of the funding council for England and Wales to fill out its expertise and to ensure parity of standards across the United Kingdom. Pilot assesments of quality in key areas will be under way in the new year. In addition, clause 33 requires the council to establish a quality assessment committee with a majority of academic members to advise on quality isues.

Higher education in Scotland is now more efficient and effective than it has ever been. The increased levels of publicly funded higher education tuition fees have, as intended, provided a strong incentive to institutions to expand efficiently. Also, the greater autonomy that we have granted to the management of our higher education colleges has resulted in greater responsiveness to the needs of students and employers.

The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will be charged with developing fair and objective methodologies for distributing resources to all the Scottish higher education institutions.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Clause 37 gives power to the council to determine the disposal of land. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware, regarding the potential opting out of Foresterhill hospital, that there is a dispute over the ownership of the land on which that hospital sits, the title of which belongs to the university of Aberdeen. May we have an assurance that under no circumstances would the council require the university to dispose of the land to any opted-out trust at below market value?

Mr. Lang: The ownership of the land would not appear to be relevant to the Bill. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern with an important local issue, but that is not necessarily affected by this debate.

The commitment we gave in our White Paper last May was to provide an appropriate level of resources to enable further efficient expansion to take place. I am happy to repeat that commitment today.

Accordingly, I can announce to the House that I have decided to increase recurrent funding for the grant-aided colleges by 12 per cent. in 1992-93. I have also increased my programme for capital funding of the colleges by over 20 per cent. Those are substantial increases, well above the projected level of inflation. They are evidence of the Government's continued commitment to higher education, and will allow the buoyant growth in student numbers to continue and to be accommodated.

Clause 36 sets out the powers of the Secretary of State to make conditions on grants to the council. There have been some suggestions that the wording of the clause represents a sinister and unprecedented assault on academic freedom. I find it difficult to understand how such a view could have arisen.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I must try to make this the last time in my speech that I give way.

Mr. Dewar: Do I take grant-aided colleges to be the central institutions?

Mr. Lang: Yes.

The clause specifically prevents the Secretary of State from attaching conditions that relate to individual institutions, just as the Education Reform Act 1988 does. The revised wording in the clause is necessary to put it beyond doubt that the Secretary of State actually can specify objectives to be met before grant can be paid by the council. That was the result intended in the debates on the 1988 Act. It was also a fundamental aspect of the funding system set out for the UFC by Lord Croham in his review of the UGC.

Clauses 39 to 41 deal with the government and organisation of the current central institutions and colleges of education. As stated in paragraph 93 of the White Paper, the Privy Council will become responsible for the government of all the institutions that will be funded by the new council. Although we shall wish to review the present arrangements in the colleges of education before effecting the transfer, we do not envisage that much change to present organisation or management structures will be required, but transfer of responsibility for these matters to the Privy Council properly reflects the desire to place all higher education institutions in a similar autonomous relationship with the Government.

Before the Privy Council begins that process, though, it is right that we should make a number of changes to relax the present restrictions on the composition of the grant-aided colleges' governing body. Accordingly, I shall shortly make an order to remove the requirement for student and staff representatives on the governing body, and in the case of central institutions to remove the requirement for local authority experience. Those changes will give the governing bodies valuable flexibility in adapting to the demands which their increased autonomy will place on them.

Clause 42 contains the important provision allowing the holder of my office to specify higher education institutions as competent to award degrees. I issued a consultation paper on that question, setting out the

proposed criteria to which I would have regard in reaching judgments on whether degree-awarding powers should be conferred on particular institutions. We have asked for comments by 2 December and I hope to announce my intentions shortly thereafter. In reaching any decisions, I shall have particular regard to the advice of the Council for National Academic Awards that all five of the Scottish technological central institutions merited both taught-course and research degree-awarding powers.

Clause 43 allows institutions to include the word "university" in their title, with the consent of the Privy Council. The White Paper said that the Government had decided that polytechnics, as a mark of their academic maturity and success, would be permitted to adopt the university title if they wished. The consultation paper that I issued also covered the criteria to which we propose to recommend that the Privy Council should have regard in considering whether other institutions should be permitted to use the title. Again, I hope to announce our conclusions in the light of consultations next month.

I should note now, however, that it is disappointing that some have interpreted the extension of the use of the university title as a signal that our polytechnics and colleges might abandon their distinctive vocational missions and overturn their organisational structures, the point to which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) referred. Those are successful and valuable institutions in their own right. They have proved their worth. There is no need for them to give up the very basis of their success to achieve the recognition they deserve. It would be extremely foolish of them not to continue to play to their undoubted strengths.

Dr. Hampson: I am interested in the question of titles. I should declare my interest as a consultant to the Association of University Teachers, and the point is of special interest to that body. The clause in the equivalent English measure, clause 73 (3), has an absolute provision that there should be no confusion of names—that where there is an existing university, that point must be considered—but I do not see in the Scottish Bill any such safeguards in terms of avoiding names that are already in being. Why are such safeguards missing from the Scottish measure?

Mr. Lang: I cannot give my hon. Friend a textual comparison word for word as between the Scottish and English measures, but I assure him that it is our objective—it must be the objective of any body applying for university status—to use a name that would not lead to confusion or misunderstanding. I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will be borne in mind, and it may be further debated in Committee.

The Bill is a landmark in Scottish education. It gives a long-overdue prominence to further education and releases further education colleges from the strictures of local authority control. They will then be free to maximise their potential to increase participation in tertiary education, to improve standards and to widen access.

The Bill is of tremendous significance to Scottish higher education. It has been warmly welcomed throughout the higher education world in Scotland. It gives new momentum to a further expansion of higher education, while maintaining and building on the outstanding reputation for high standards which our universities presently enjoy.

The Bill provides an opportunity for all. It is another huge step on the way to grasping the glittering prize of higher education for all who are fit and willing to benefit from it. Under our administration, higher education has become a growth industry. With the Bill, the Government have met the university challenge. I commend it to the House.

5.19 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I was interested to hear the Secretary of State speak of glittering prizes. I thought that he spoke with a slight air of whimsical nostalgia and I fear that few such prizes await him in the months that lie ahead.

I welcome the Government's decision to implement one of the most important recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council report. It has taken them a long time but they have ultimately arrived. They have accepted that on the funding and planning machinery for Scottish universities, as on so many other issues recently, Labour has got it right. To be fair, it is not Labour but STEAC which has got it right. I wish to pay tribute to Donald McCallum and his colleagues for their sterling work in 1985-86 on the STEAC report. It would be unfair to accuse the Government of a U-turn on the matter. Rather, there has been a long, confused period of indecision and even now there is much doubt on exactly what is intended in the university sector. I shall return to that theme later in my speech.

The House will remember that in July 1986 the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), announced bravely a postponed decision on the proposal for an over-arching body responsible for Scottish higher education. He said that the Government were postponing it until such time as they could form a clear view. I did not know whether we had reached that point, but having heard the Secretary of State, I now know that we have not, because he said very little about how the system would operate or about his objectives.

I welcome the fact that over the past three or four years there has been a shift in opinion on a Scottish funding body. In March 1986, Lord Croham, who was then heading a committee reporting on university finance, took evidence in Scotland. He found that two out of the eight universities were in favour of the STEAC recommendation at that time, while the remainder were against it. There is now unanimity. I am sorry that the representative of the Association of University Teachers, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), who has read the Bill so carefully, is no longer with us. The AUT in Scotland had grave reservations about the matter but now, as I know from many discussions and a meeting that we had as recently as yesterday, it is now strongly in favour of it. Even the Government have at last caught up. There are good reasons for that change of heart.

The Labour party believes that higher education should be developed as a whole and planned as an entity. One criterion is the national interest and the drive to ensure that the best possible opportunities exist for youngsters leaving school. The Government have a duty to provide a wider choice in higher education and it is in the national interest to have a skilled and educated work force in place. The best way to do so is to have a funding and planning

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

body, as I understand that the Bill intends, and to recognise and build on the distinctive tradition and contribution of Scottish universities over the years.

I assure the Secretary of State that the Labour party welcomes his decision to try to remove the binary line. It is right to bridge the divide between universities and other institutions of higher education. It has been a barrier to progress and, as suggested by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), it can be based on prejudice and nothing else. However, such a divide has great and potent power. Those of us who have been lobbied powerfully and persuasively by some of the central institutions interested in university status are left in no doubt about the importance of that prize. I hope that the Minister will agree that it is important that, in making such an adjustment, we abolish the binary divide and do not merely move it and create another artificial division in the world of higher education with a fault line running at a different point across the range.

The problem is to combine excellence with increased access. The two are not incompatible and high standards must be maintained. There is still a gap between the number of people entering higher education in Scotland compared to most of our European competitors. We tend to say that we do well compared with the English, although that comparison is now beginning to blur. We still have an advantage and I am grateful for it, but on the international league table the position is less satisfactory. We still have a massive job to do in Scotland in encouraging students and potential students from areas where economic disadvantage is still a crippling inhibition to academic ambitions. We also have a problem of encouraging women. Although massive strides have been taken, and women are performing much better in the academic world, especially in the later years of school and at university, only 44 per cent. of university students are women and there is clearly some way to go on that issue.

Therefore, we must aim to build both access and high standards and to build on the honourable tradition of our universities. When I was thinking about that—it was perhaps a little whimsical—I remembered when I was a student at Glasgow university and was asked to review a copy of the then new publication by George Davie, the "Democratic Intellect", which looks in great detail at universities in Scotland in the 19th century. I dug out that review out of curiosity. Looking back over a Glasgow university magazine of January 1962 was quite an experience. It said:

> "On the weekend of 10th-11th February, Donald Dewar's band of merry men take the high-road once more for Aberoyle, where they are running a weekend school at the Covenanters' Inn."

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will my hon. Friend let me know which team he supports?

Mr. Dewar: Memories, memories.

The review went on:

> "The speaker is Richard Marsh, MP, the subjects . . . 'The Common Market', and the overall cost (which includes transport, dinner dance, accommodation and all meals) two guineas."

I had forgotten that there was a day when the more elegant parts of the Labour movement counted in guineas.

In that review I was arguing that the breadth and range in Scottish education should be retained. I may have taken the rather romantic view of the glories of the MA (Ord), but I still hold to that general thesis. The Scottish system should not be a poor copycat of the system which exists south of the border or any other part of the world, and the traditional strengths should not be eroded.

I hope that my speech will spark off a useful exchange with the Minister of State when he replies to the debate. The Bill contains an outline of a system which, with regard to universities, has much to be said for it. The question remains of how and whether it will work. There was remarkably little detail on that in the Secretary of State's speech. Expansion clearly has resource implications and the bills must be paid. We are to have Napier college and Glasgow college of technology, and I understand that the Robert Gordon institute of technology and Paisley college are anxiously awaiting the starting signal.

I enjoyed the Minister of State's little foray into the north. Embarrassingly, it happened to coincide with the by-election at Kincardine and Deeside. It is a little like the story of the dog that did not bark—a meeting between the Minister of State and the Tory candidate which did not take place. Full of wide-eyed innocence, the Minister of State told a meeting at the Robert Gordon institute of technology that he could not think how anyone could imagine that the criteria for university status would not be met by that college. As we all know, there were good reasons for fears. The Labour party welcomes the fact that, from the Secretary of State's speech, it seems that both the Robert Gordon institute of technology and Paisley college are now on the list. I hope that if they come through they will make a worthwhile and distinguished contribution to Scottish universities.

Will the Minister of State turn his mind to a few simple and basic questions? They may be pedestrian questions, but I do not know the answers to them and, although I have earnestly inquired from people in the university world at a variety of levels, they do not seem to be clear about the answers either. How will the Scottish higher education funding council deliver? The binary divide cannot be abolished simply by diktat. One has only to look at Universities Funding Council expenditure to see the gap which existed between the funding of universities and the polytechnics and central institutions. The new universities —potentially four in Scotland and perhaps more to come —will expect to rise to the standards of their peer group. They will expect to level up, not to drive university standards down. That raises fundamental problems and basic questions. This is no more than an enabling Bill and tells us little. I do not want the Minister of State to give a deadpan defence of a system that has been set up by Ministers who, as yet, have no idea how it will work. I hope that we shall be given a precise description.

I certainly intend to move the motion to pass the Bill to a Special Standing Committee. It would be a uniquely useful opportunity. As far as I know, that procedure has not been used on a Scottish Bill since it has been in existence. I know that many people—whether from within the Association of University Teachers, principals, vice-chancellors or officials at some of the colleges and universities—who would like to use the Select Committee procedure grafted on to the normal Standing Committee to probe and establish exactly how the system will work. I do not say that in a partisan spirit, but I cannot think of a more suitable Bill for that procedure. I hope that between now and the Division the Secretary of State will

think about that and the credit that would befall him were he to give way on that point and persuade his colleagues not to resist the motion.

There are eight universities in Scotland at present. There are more university places than could be expected on any population ratio. We have enjoyed a higher percentage of the Universities Funding Council—and, before that, the University Grants Committee—budget than our population share. If the Government were to follow the unpleasant moderate habit of threatening a reduction to per capita allocation, it would amount to the loss of an entire university. How are we to build in protection against that possibility? How are we to allow increased access and continue to grant places to students from outside Scotland? Some 20 per cent. of students following degree courses are not domiciled in Scotland. I consider that to be a strength, not a weakness, provided there are places for Scottish students who want to take them. At present, we export 4,500 students to English universities.

All those advantages raise practical questions that must be answered soon. The Bill merely states:

"As far as the funding of the higher educational institutions themselves is concerned, the total in Scotland would not vary materially because of the provisions of this Bill."

I understand that, but it begs an enormous number of questions. We are creating a totally new system and we must know how it is to be defined. Will the Minister state how the budget of the new funding council will be calculated? I am not asking for a figure as that would be unreasonable, and I would not expect him to be able to give one, but it is important that he should give some of the methodology. Am I right in assuming that the total amount will come partially from the former UFC expenditure on Scottish institutions and the remainder from Scottish Office expenditure on central institutions? Can the Secretary of State confirm that? Will there be an increase in the total Scottish Office budget to take account of the new higher education responsibilities in funding? Will the procedure be that, on that basis, an annual total will emerge from the bargaining within the Scottish Office and then be handed over for distribution to the new funding council?

I hope that I am right in saying—I have certainly been advised that this is so—that in general terms a Scottish university spends about two thirds of its UFC money on teaching, and one third on research. Some of my hon. Friends know a great deal about the subject, and I know that the research funding is formidably important. In 1989-90, the UFC distributed to universities in the United Kingdom £860 million in research support. That sum is vastly greater than the comparable figure for research councils, which contributed only about £260 million. May I assume that the research councils will continue to operate on the United Kingdom basis?

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend cannot make that assumption.

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend says that I cannot make that assumption. Perhaps the Minister of State can arbitrate on that.

More importantly, will the equivalent of the present enormous amount of UFC research money be included in the new funding council's budget and will the council be responsible for its distribution? Will the UFC's successor, the funding council in England, have any jurisdiction in Scotland? If that research funding were excluded, it would seem that the new Scottish council would be involved financially only in teaching costs. That would represent an artificial and damaging separation of research and teaching which would weaken the system. I have outlined at some length a number of fundamental issues and I genuinely expect the Minister to try to answer them.

I am puzzled that there is no definition or reference in the Bill to a planning function for the new council. What influence will it have over policy? It may contain an inherent power, but it is important for the Minister to say more about that. Enormously important decisions will have to be taken about the new universities, such as how they are to be integrated, how funds are to be distributed, and how we are to respond to the Howie report, which will presumably lead to major changes in higher school education within the next two or three months.

The new council has a remit to plan higher education as a whole, but will it be able to make the changes that it considers necessary? Let us suppose that the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has reservations about the distribution system, which is based on the assumption that the cash follows the student. Would it be able to vary that and introduce a new system of bidding for cash among Scottish universities? Could it alter the selectivity system for the distribution of research funds—assuming that the UFC research element will be included in the new funding council's budget?

There is keen interest in a university for the highlands, which would almost certainly have to be built in existing colleges and may have to evolve over several years. The Labour party has expressed sympathy with the idea, and would like to see action. However, we must ensure that it is a carefully worked-out scheme. Would it fall within the remit of the new funding organisation?

Another important point which the Minister may have anticipated involves the importance of the relationship between higher education and Government, and brings me conveniently—if that is the right word—to clause 48. The language of that clause is stark and direct, and appears on the face of it to give the Secretary of State unlimited and unbridled power to dictate. It is important that the Secretary of State should say a little about its significance.

There is no equivalent to the English clause 77(2), which relates specifically to financial considerations. Some people have tried to take comfort from the fact that such an omission provides a negative safeguard for Scottish higher education, but I remain sceptical. I am surprised that the Secretary of State did not address that problem, which has been raised with me by almost everyone with whom I have discussed the Bill. I should have thought that he would want to take action to allay the genuine fears about what the Scottish Office is doing.

The Secretary of State must accept, although he may not like it, that old wounds and memories of the 1988 argument in England still remain. It was then thought by those who were threatened that an open assault was being launched on academic freedom, and the Government were forced to retreat. The Secretary of State shakes his head, but time and again it has been put to me and to my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) that the present proposal would take us back to the 1988 argument in a way that would be disastrous for confidence and for the relationship between central Government and higher education.

Dr. Godman: I am worried about the measure. If a funding council decided, on principle, to disregard such a directive, presumably the Secretary of State could dismiss its officers.

Mr. Dewar: The position is clear. If a direction is given, there is a legal duty on the funding council to accept that direction. Obviously, I would expect a funding council to work within the framework of the law——

Dr. Godman: Or resign.

Mr. Dewar: Or resign, if it did not wish to be involved in what it saw as a fundamental mistake. But if that measure is on the statute book, it is obviously something that we have a duty to investigate.

No doubt I shall be told by the Secretary of State that that is a routine provision, a fallback power of last resort. He may argue that he is merely paying an unnecessary price for previous convictions and that the fears are groundless, but I am not convinced. Perhaps the Minister should read the leader in *The Guardian* last week, which held that

"ministers have inserted a clause into the latest Higher Education Bill which would so extend their right to intervene that academic freedom would effectively be finished.".

That is probably an overstatement, but the very fact that such a view can be expressed from that area makes it imperative that the Secretary of State should deal with that point.

I welcome—it would be churlish not to—what the Secretary of State said about funding for central institutions. That is helpful and long overdue, particularly on the capital budget. I have not had time to digest or examine the details of his speech, but it is unfortunate that central institution boards should now lose the staff and student places in particular. It is an odd proposal, particularly as schedule 1 contains a particular obligation for the boards of further education colleges to have elected representatives from the staff and students. If that is right for further education colleges, I am not clear why the Secretary of State should suddenly have announced that there will be no protected right for staff and student representation on the board of central institutions.

That will be taken as a gloomy opening chapter to the new system introduced by this legislation. My instinct is that it is wrong, it will be resented and it will sour the atmosphere. I should be interested to hear from colleagues on the Committee what kind of detailed explanations the Secretary of State gives at a later stage.

Now I come briefly, briskly but importantly to the other section of the Bill—the objectionable and misconceived proposals for further education. They were always predictable and they are certainly mean-spirited. We know that some time ago the Government decided to remove responsibility for funding further education from local authorities and now they are coming back to complete what I regard as a fairly brutal piece of surgery.

There is no justification for the proposals. They are incompatible with the spirit of what the Secretary of State is trying to do elsewhere in the Bill. He is trying to implement the STEAC over-arching concept. he is trying to accept that we have an integrated higher education sector, that there is an emphasis on planning and close co-operation with our schools. There can be no argument but that that is the way forward. If the objective is joint action, if there is to be co-operation, I genuinely do not see why we suddenly need to fragment into individual units the further education sector in the way that is proposed. Each one has been floated off in a way for which no real argument was advanced.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I agree with the thrust of what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Is not the Secretary of State trying to take control of education away from local authorities so that he and his Ministers can implement policies for which they have no support and for which they cannot be called to account?

Mr. Dewar: The sad conclusion is that at the heart of the matter is Ministers' dislike and suspicion of local democracy and what local authorities stand for.

I cannot expect the Minister of State to give a great deal of detail, but when he replies I hope that he will deal in passing with, for example, this week's press reports that there is a possibility of non-elected quangos, non-elected boards, taking over the entire responsibility of education authorities. It would take only a sentence for the Minister of State to kill off that latest crazy proposal emerging from the dark recesses of the Scottish Conservative party and it is extremely important that he does so. In fact, I should be prepared to give way to the Secretary of State if he would rise to say that, whatever may be on the agenda, that is not.

Well, there we are. I am not entirely surprised, but I give the Secretary of State fair warning that such a proposal, such centralisation, with the power in the hands of the appointed body and the Secretary of State, will be resented by people of every political persuasion in Scotland and many who do not consider themselves to be involved in politics at all. If that is the way in which the Tory party seeks to climb back from the abyss, the Secretary of State's logic is perverse.

I finish by asking one or two questions about further education. Why is no buffer authority being proposed in Scotland for further education? Why is there no further education funding council as there is in England? I have no objection to commercial and industrial involvement in the colleges. The world of industry and business has an interest in day release courses, higher national certificates and training places. They have much to contribute. But the Bill cannot be described as an exercise in devolution, certainly with regard to further education colleges. Although there will be independent boards dominated by local business interests, there will be a concentration and centralisation of power in the hands of the Scottish Office, and that is unmistakable.

The Minister of State must say something about the position of local authorities. We were told originally that they would have a discretionary power to provide further education facilities, but only for social and recreational services; it was limited. I notice that the Department of Education and Science south of the border says that local authorities can, at their discretion, supply any and all kinds of further education. Will that be the case in Scotland, or is it limited in the way we understood originally? Local authorities will still have a duty to supply what is described as further education other than that defined in the Bill. I am genuinely not clear what that means. Perhaps the Minister of State will define it by example—I think that that is the easiest way.

It is not devolution—I stress this—as the Minister of State seemed to be claiming on Radio Scotland's "Good Morning Scotland" programme this morning, or so I am

told: it is centralisation. The Secretary of State will hold the purse strings. He can create new colleges and merge or close existing ones. Under clause 4, it is the Secretary of State who meets the bills. That must be a cause for concern. In constant terms, expenditure on colleges of further education has increased from 1979-80 to 1989-90 from £179 million to £244 million. We must maintain some momentum if additional access and the bridging into higher education in a more formal sense is to be real. For the Secretary of State simply to say that he will fund on the basis of a full range of courses offered begs every question and gives no detail.

In addition, there is the question of the make-up of the boards of those colleges. I have already referred to the domination of industrial and commercial interests. If I read schedule 1 aright, once the board's have been set up initially they will be self-appointing and self-generating. I am not encouraged to say that in that sense they will, to quote the Secretary of State, be

"akin to the board of a company."

I know that the Secretary of State will think that it is special pleading for old friends and old connections, but it is clear from schedule 1 that, when considering appointments, there is a duty to consider people who have an interest in the work of a college, having regard to the interests of the education authority. But if one looks at the arithmetic more closely, that may be as few as two places. There is no guarantee that anyone from the education authority needs to be appointed at all.

Whatever one might think about education authorities and their record, the need for close co-operation between the further education colleges and the schools system is something about which there can be no argument at all. To remove any sort of right to representation in the way schedule 1 presently does is surely not a positive advertisement for co-operation which is supposed to be the basis of the new system.

The proposals for further education in the Bill are petty, unsettling and counter-productive and we shall vote against them tonight. There is about the whole concept a startling lack of any mission statement—any definition of the spirit in which the new Scottish funding councils or further education colleges are to approach their tasks. There is the outline of a structure in the council for universities, but no indication of what that council must do or any mention of a planning role.

Even the Bill's definition of higher education is strangely limited. Clause 32 makes it clear only that the test is reaching a higher standard than necessary for the Scottish certificate of education or the general certificate of education. That does not seem a satisfactory way of approaching the task, and certainly undervalues the enormous challenges to be met in our universities, central institutions, and higher education generally. The vision required is far greater than that shown by the Government or by the Secretary of State and his Ministers.

The problems at a practical level are there for all to see. I mention as an example the crisis over university pay and conditions. Last year, lecturers received an increase of 6·4 per cent. when the employers themselves accepted that 16 per cent. would be more realistic. Short-term contracts, blocked promotion prospects and collapsing morale are massive and real difficulties in our universities.

Reference has already been made—and there will be many more such references—to the problems facing students. They include the erosion of grants over the years and the specious loans scheme, which the Minister inadequately defended a few moments ago.

The university title must not be an empty honour or a doubtful opportunity to compete with established rivals for inadequate funding. That will be the danger and threat under the present Government if the Treasury has its way. The basis of the system can be strengthened by reform, but it must not be eroded—as could happen if there is insufficient commitment, and if more is not heard about the Government's willingness to fund the system and to provide the resources that it needs.

The vision must be there and the resources committed if the potential is to be realised. There is undoubtedly a need for a new approach and a change of direction that the present discredited Administration cannot deliver. The Bill provides such an opportunity, but I suspect that it will be left to be exploited by the next Government of another party.

5.51 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is not uncommon for me to find myself batting first wicket down to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), but his performance today was peculiarly passive. He was scratching around to find any reason to vote against the Bill. I warmly welcome it—as do universities, polytechnics, centrally funded colleges, and the principals and staff of colleges of technology and of further education. About the only people against the Bill are Opposition Members.

The amendment in the names of Labour Members is the wettest that I have ever seen. I imagine that the hon. Members responsible had to wear wellington boots when they drafted it. It is the very least that they could table in order to vote against the Bill.

The Liberal Democrats' amendment is even less authoritative. They apparently found it more difficult still to find a reason for opposing the Bill. If they are so keen on all forms of assembly and devolution, one wonders why they are not prepared to allow power to be devolved to college councils. It is a very disappointing start to a Second Reading debate to find an Opposition who are so mealy-mouthed, and who look for difficulties where none exists.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: No, the hon. Gentleman has already intervened about four times. He can make his own speech later—there will be plenty of time.

People say that nostalgia is not what it used to be, but I cannot help but recollect when, as Minister responsible for education, I introduced the raising of the school leaving age to 16 and had to find teachers, and roofs to put over the heads of primary and secondary school pupils. One can easily see how far education has advanced over the years. It has been transformed, and is today a very different world from that of 20 or 30 years ago.

Scotland has a long tradition of academic excellence, and it is right to build reforms on those foundations. The Bill is important not only for what it directly says about education but about the administration and structure of university and further education in the future. It sets the tone for many years ahead.

A great deal of detail will have to be considered in Committee.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will the hon. Gentleman be serving on the Committee?

Sir Hector Monro: I will, and I am looking forward to it. I do not know why some right hon. and hon. Members object to working on the Committee stage of a Bill. I think that it is the most interesting part of our parliamentary work.

The Committee will be able to consider points that have been made by the Scottish Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Mr. Dewar: I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman has a good Committee record, and always takes a close interest.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): He has to do so.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister suggests that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has no choice, but I give him due credit.

The hon. Gentleman may recall that I suggested that a Special Standing Committee should sit for three sessions on a Select Committee basis before the Standing Committee got down to work. Does he agree that would be both welcomed by the educational world in Scotland and a good investment for parliamentary procedures?

Sir Hector Monro: It was interesting that the hon. Gentleman made that point, because I was a member of the Select Committee on Procedure when it examined in detail the advantages or otherwise of having a Special Standing Committee. As one who was so involved in the Scottish Standing Committee, I was somewhat reluctant to adopt that proposal, because one likes to deal with such matters oneself. Given that the Bill is the principal legislation for Scotland this Session, it seems right to get Scottish Back Benchers involved right from the start.

I do not mean to be dogmatic, but the hon. Member for Garscadden must remember that we have not tried such a procedure before. Standing Orders allow for such a Special Standing Committee, but I have yet to be convinced that it would be better than the conventional Standing Committee procedure. I do not hold hard and fast to that view, but the hon. Gentleman asked for my opinion.

The Standing Committee will also be able to consider representations from those representing the mentally handicapped, the question of university status, and the application—which will be considered at the appropriate moment by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—by the Dundee institute of technology.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on his earlier comment that few people find difficulty with the Bill? Some right hon. and hon. Members, and perhaps even the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) himself, have received the views of the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, whose brief makes this crucial point:

"Sir Roy Griffiths identified the multiplicity of agencies and the lack of proper co-ordination as one of the key failures in community care policy."

Does the hon. Gentleman agree with that heavyweight opinion?

Sir Hector Monro: I mentioned the mentally handicapped because I read that very brief this morning. That is an important Committee point, but perhaps not one to be debated in detail now. Tonight we are dealing with the broad brush of the Second Reading of the Bill, to which I give a general welcome.

The Bill places great emphasis on higher and vocational training and of welding the two closer than they are at present. In recent years, great emphasis has rightly been placed on training, and its financing has been taken over to a large extent in Scotland by local enterprise companies, Scotvec, for which I have a high regard, and other organisations. It is disappointing that Opposition Members and local authorities should be so ready to criticise the provision of training places in Scotland. Things are going too well. It will, of course, take a little time for Scottish Enterprise to get over its teething troubles, but it is coping with the misunderstandings, and it has the finance. I am sure that there will be many fewer hiccups next year.

I welcomed my right hon. Friend's announcement of a substantial increase in funding: that will provide a springboard for the new board of management. A few months ago, it was said that the Dumfries and Galloway regional training unit would close next year, without the detailed consultation with the local enterprise company that I considered essential—as, I am sure, did my right hon. Friend. Now, however, it seems that places will be available, and that the opportunities will be there.

In a very good speech last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out that more and better training is now available than ever before. I give the Government full credit for providing all these opportunities for boys and girls in Scotland. The Bill, however, is about freedom—the freedom for college councils, which will become boards of management, to determine their own destiny within financial guidelines. It is crucially important for them to become independent.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Has the hon. Gentleman read the letter sent by the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics to the Secretary of State, or the letter sent by the Scottish vice-principals? Both letters warn that the expanded powers conferred on the Secretary of State by clause 36 could be used to threaten academic freedom. Those points were made with some force. Will the hon. Gentleman make representations to his right hon. Friend?

Sir Hector Monro: It is always possible to misread legislation. Why should we always look on the black side? Why not see the positive, constructive way forward? If the boards of management behave responsibly, there should be no conflict between them and the Department. Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman seems to be looking for difficulties that do not exist.

In my view, the college councils have already proved successful—and a credit to the Government, who introduced the system not so long ago. I am told that they can now reach a decision at a single meeting: they no longer have to go back to the education committee, or to secure approval for the minutes by a full council. I do not criticise the local authorities, which have done a fine job in establishing colleges of technology. They have built them up from scratch and provided the necessary staff and facilities, and thousands of students have gained qualifications and excellent jobs as a result. I merely want us to make what already exists even better.

It is understandable that local authorities are reluctant to lose control of the colleges that they have built up. In Committee, however, we should consider the link between further education and the education authority—the liaison, or co-ordination, or whatever hon. Members want to call it. There must be a follow-through between secondary school courses and the new college management structure. As long as good will is maintained, I do not think that that will be difficult to achieve. I do not think that we need a formal, statutory link between the education authority and the board of management.

My constituency contains two excellent institutions, which rightly wish to maintain their distinctive characteristics. Dumfries and Galloway college of technology offers a wide choice of courses, and Barony agricultural college is in the forefront of Scottish agricultural education: it is involved in fish farming, deer farming and many other enterprises. I have talked to those colleges, and both are pleased with the Bill. Their college councils are working well, and the colleges are happy for them to be converted into boards of management at the appropriate time. They should be able to continue their excellent work; a college is only as good as its staff, as others have pointed out.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) mentioned finance—perhaps the main issue for the education authorities. The authorities have invested millions of pounds in colleges, and feel that they are due some compensation. What about the loan charges? I heard my right hon. Friend's reply, and no doubt the point will be discussed in detail in Committee. I feel, however, that my hon. Friend the Minister of State should emphasise the Bill's provision for up-front financial support for the establishment of the system up to April 1983. That is when the college councils and, subsequently, the boards of management take over from the education authorities, and the new system of payment of salaries and costs will be introduced. A good deal of computer work will be needed, as the two systems will run in parallel for a while. I know that my right hon. Friend has allowed a certain sum, but all local authorities will want to know whether that is enough.

I am very pleased about the introduction of funding councils for the universities. I trust that my right hon. Friend will leaven their membership—which will, of course, be heavily biased towards academic considerations —with some commercial and industrial representatives, who would, I think, bring useful experience to bear.

We are on the right road. Staff are important, but students are equally important. More and more people are attending universities and colleges in Scotland, and it is clear from the statistics that they are receiving the courses they want. That increase in numbers belies the claim that the loan system deters students; I think that it has done the opposite. When the new administration takes over the colleges in 1993, I take it that all student loans will come from the Scottish Office rather than a proportion coming from local authority bursaries and other means of local authority funding.

The Bill holds out great hope for the future. I am confident that it will lead to an even higher quality of education in Scotland. I wish it well.

6.9 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) will forgive me if I do not comment on what he said. As I may not chair the First Scottish Standing Committee, since I am participating in the Second Reading debate on the Bill, I shall be unable to listen to his often distinctive and independent views on a particular matter and what should be done about it. I hope that the independence of mind that he often demonstrates in Committee will be demonstrated again tonight. I hope that he will vote for the Special Standing Committee procedure that is to be recommended to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

The aim of the Bill is supposed to be to improve participation in and the quality of higher and further education in Scotland. That sounds good and it is to be welcomed. However, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that it is an attempt to blame all our education and economic ills on defective education and training instead of on too little investment and too little Government support for industry and the infrastructure. Nevertheless, I welcome worthy developments, whatever the motive. The weakness of the Bill is that it is all about mechanism and nomenclature instead of about planning and resources.

I hope that the Minister of State, who is engaged in a conversation with my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), will not say when he winds up the debate that we are asking for money to be thrown at the problem. In education, it is a case either of providing more resources or of accepting that if numbers go up the quality will go down.

There comes a point at which institutions, if they had any fat to burn off, have long since done so. Cumbernauld college in my constituency is an example. Its information technology equipment, bought with a special grant from the education authority, is dated and coming to the end of its working life. There is no way that the college will be able to replace it from revenue.

The restriction on local government expenditure in general and on education in particular has produced institutions so lean that their ribs show. No amount of changing who they are responsible to, or who sits on their governing bodies, will enable them to provide for more students, more flexibility and a higher quality of tuition. For that we need more resources. Nothing in the Bill suggests that there is any intention to provide them.

That basic weakness apart, the Bill has some strange features. Apparently, there are to be concurrent powers, though not concurrent duties, given to the Scottish Office and the education authorities. That would appear to be an effort to allow education authorities to provide for their local populations as they see fit. But is it? If they decide to spend on adult education, for example, will they find themselves council charge capped for putting up their charges to fund discretionary services? When the Minister of State has finished talking to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who apparently has crossed the Floor, perhaps he will——

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): He is just trying out the seat over there.

Mr. Hogg: I think he looks very distinguished. It is only a matter of weeks until he will be sitting there.

[Mr. Hogg]

The provision of full-time courses is an important criterion for the eligibility of institutions to call themselves universities. That is strange, as the Government's stated policy is to provide education more flexibly, to meet the needs and convenience of students. The mode of learning has nothing to do with the intellectual level of study, which should surely be the criterion. We need an explanation. Do the Government believe that part-time study is rather second rate, despite the very good examples of such provision by Birkbeck college and the Open university? I notice that the Minister shakes his head. I hope that he will deal with that point.

Another fixation seems to be size. If an institution wants to call itself a university, it will, according to the consultative document, have to have a minimum of 3,000 full-time students and 4,000 full-time equivalents. That would rule out institutions such as the Dundee institute of technology which can meet all requirements regarding the level and quality of the learning opportunities that it provides. If my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) participates in the debate, I am sure that he will have something to say about that. Clearly, the Secretary of State is no believer in "small is beautiful", although "small is beautiful" might prove to be a campaign slogan for the Tory party in Scotland.

The Bill reveals a dogmatic dislike and distrust of local government. That theme runs through every single measure to which the Minister of State turns his hand. There is no evidence that further education is being provided badly by Scottish local government—still less that direct operation by the Scottish Office could provide it any better. On the contrary, to remove further education from local government will make it pretty well impossible to plan comprehensive area services for 16 to 19-year-olds —or, for that matter, for adults—to make the most effective use of education premises for the wide variety of communal needs that they should serve, to provide effectively for allied functions, such as careers advice, and to integrate the various services which together are needed to enrich community and personal development. Such integration has been an encouraging trend in recent years, in terms of both effect and economy.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Gentleman is always fair when we debate these matters. If he believes that this further education measure is motivated by prejudice against local government, why does he think that the Association of Principals of Further Education Colleges welcomed the Bill's provisions, as well as the individual colleges? Could it be that they believe that they will be able to do their jobs more effectively?

Mr. Hogg: A brief is being handed to me to answer that question, but I hope that I shall be forgiven if I do not attempt to read it. The close print defeats my national health service spectacles. What teachers in the various institutions are saying to us is a matter of judgment and experience. That may be the view of the principals, but we shall have to wait and see what is said. I stand by the point that I made.

If, in the face of all this, the importance of giving colleges more managerial freedom is argued, I can only say that such an argument reveals a startling lack of a sense of proportion. Greater managerial freedom could easily be obtained by measures similar to local management of schools, without all the disadvantages of removing the institutions from local government.

The desire to punish local authorities—I know not what else it can be—is evident, too, in the strange provision that if a college sells an asset after April 1993, the Government will get the proceeds but the local authority will still have to pay any debt charges outstanding on the asset.

The clearest give-away is the representation of education authorities on governing bodies. Unlike business interests, and even the staff and students of institutions, there is no specific provision for the representation of education authorities, yet they are the only elected bodies that can represent local communities. The various business people who will populate the governing bodies, however worthy, will be unaccountable and will become self-perpetuating. Where is the democratic principle in that?

If, however, local government representatives get on governing bodies, it is specified that they must not become chairmen. In other words, they will not just be second-class citizens but pariahs, rather in the way that those in custody in our prisons and those who populate another place are not allowed to vote—but not for the same good reasons.

I know that the Minister of State is obsessed with manpower. It therefore struck me as odd that only 30 additional civil servants will be appointed as a consequence of the Bill. I am not a betting man, but I wager that if the Scottish Office intends to deal effectively with almost 50 institutions and thousands of students it will need more than that or it will be skimping the job. The transfer of further education to the Scottish Office is an act not of logic but of spite.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): My hon. Friend said that 30 civil servants are not enough for the job. Is he aware that that is almost as many people as attended the Young Conservatives national conference for Scotland at the weekend?

Mr. Hogg: Most of them were clearly in need of further education. Perhaps the Bill will be helpful after all.

I am convinced that more civil servants will be required. The Minister is kidding us if he thinks that he can pass a Bill of this magnitude with provision for only 30 additional civil servants.

The Bill asks institutions to "have regard" for special circumstances and special needs. It is interesting to note that language teaching for people whose family tongue is not English is specifically included under further education in the English Bill but seems to be specifically excluded in this Bill. When the Minister of State has had a chance—

Mr. Foulkes: To wake up.

Mr. Hogg —to consider the matter without allowing himself to be amused by the interruptions of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and everywhere else, perhaps he will say why it is overlooked in this Bill when it is specifically included in the English Bill. I am not referring to Gaelic speakers.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Why not?

Mr. Hogg: Few people speak Gaelic as a first language.

Mrs. Ewing: No.

Mr. Hogg: Their number has been diminishing over the years. People have come in from Commonwealth countries, so this important point must be addressed.

Particularly disturbing is the threat to academic freedom and freedom of speech in the all-embracing clause 36, which gives the Secretary of State power to make grants

"subject to such terms and conditions as he may"

define. No doubt the Minister will say that restricting what is taught, and how, is not his intention, but intent is no part of the law. The words appear in the Bill, and this year we have had two examples of the intervention of the Department of Education and Science, not the Scottish Office, in the subject matter and literature used for learning —once on a trades union studies course and once in respect of English language teaching.

The truth is that the Bill is another piece of ill-considered legislation, advanced more for decoration, and one more hit at local government, than for any good that it is likely to do for access to education and training. All this is coming from a Government who profess to want to return services to the people. We know that that is a centralist joke.

If the Bill has a permanent place in history, other than for the chaos that it will cause, it will be for enabling central institutions to become universities. That may have cosmetic advantages, but it typifies the weakness of the Bill and its lost opportunities. It may change the name, but the game seems to remain the same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call Mr. Bill Walker.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have just called the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I do not question your right to choose hon. Members in whatever order you think appropriate, but the hon. Gentleman was not present for the opening speeches. Is it in order for hon. Members who wish to speak to be called before hon. Members who have been waiting, or is that privilege reserved only for the Scottish Tory rump?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I well understand the resentment that the hon. Gentleman is expressing, but the Chair must take many factors into account. Who is called to speak is a matter for the absolute discretion of the occupant of the Chair.

6.26 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Before that intervention, I was about to offer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Chamber my apologies and regrets for being detained upstairs in Committee Room 10 studying the Bill to replace the community charge. I mistakenly thought that Opposition Members favoured that. I was involved in the Scottish part of the Bill until I came downstairs. I believe that the House will understand. Labour and Conservative Members from Scotland, who staff the Committees well, generally do most of the work.

Mr. Foulkes: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman. As one of the few Tory Back Benchers from Scotland, he faces the great difficulty of having to man Committees and attend the Chamber at the same time. But would not his job be easier if his right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) would attend the Chamber from time to time and carry out the responsibilities for which he was elected and is still being paid to do?

Mr. Walker: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not expect me to respond to that intervention. It has little to do with the Bill. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues should be careful. Labour Members from Scotland frequently consider Bills which mainly affect English areas of influence and spheres of operation. Often, they are unable to attend the Chamber because they are diligently carrying out their duties in Committee.

I welcome the Bill before us now because it provides for further education colleges to be run by local boards of management. That is real devolution—not the stuff that we get dressed up by Opposition Members. It enables local people to make decisions about their local colleges. That is very important.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that further education colleges are responsible to local authorities which are democratically elected by the people of their communities? How can he argue that the proposed change would be more democratic? It would be much less democratic.

Mr. Walker: I have no difficulty in arguing with that point. If the hon. Lady were to turn to her colleague's constituency of Angus, East, for example, she would find that the people in Arbroath—as in Forfar—fondly believe that they are better equipped than the people in Dundee to make decisions about their colleges. The people of Oban certainly believe that they are better equipped to make the decisions than the people in Glasgow. That is real devolution. It is sad, but whatever the merits have been in the past, one of the great advantages of making progress is that if one can allow local people to make decisions about what is happening in their community, they will happily accept. As I said, that is real devolution.

Mr. Worthington: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Oban and the importance of local people deciding. Can he tell us which further education college serves Oban? Which is the nearest one?

Mr. Walker: I cannot give an answer, but I can certainly give the answer for Arbroath and for Tayside. Perhaps the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), who has just made an appearance, will help me out. She has been serving on the same Committee, so that is an example of how hard she and I have been working on behalf of Scottish interests. I am pleased that she has also escaped from the Committee to come to the Chamber. She will understand the interest when I say that the people of Oban are better equipped to make decisions about their area than the people from Glasgow. I do not pretend to be an expert on every further education college in Scotland. That would be nonsense because I am not.

We hear much about funding and finance which is quite proper because one cannot run institutions without adequate funding. It is interesting that the 46 further education colleges in Scotland have budgets of £200 million and that they train 200,000 people each year. The Scottish education funding council to be set up under the Bill will fund universities and higher education in Scotland. Again, that involves the control of finance and the awarding of powers to various institutions which is real

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devolution. What we mean by devolution is giving people in Scotland power over matters that they can influence directly. We are not playing the game of shadow politics.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Most of us who refer to devolution or to home rule usually include a democratic element. Where is the democracy in the Bill's proposals?

Mr. Walker: The interesting thing about democracy is that it is a very fragile creature. Unless one participates in democracy, there is a risk of it withering away. One of the problems at local government level in Scotland is the derisory turnout at the polls. However, in Arbroath there was a high turnout at the last regional election to depose the incumbent councillor. The councillor who won—I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree as the winner was a member of his party—did so on the basis that the people in Tayside based in Dundee did not understand, were not au fait with, and had no empathy with the problems of Arbroath. The hon. Gentleman is making my argument for me and I thank him. If one considers the low turnouts at local council elections, the argument about local accountability and democracy wears very thin.

I return to the points that I was making about real devolution. The eight universities in Scotland receive £300 million a year of taxpayers' funds and the 18 grant-aided colleges receive £175 million of taxpayers' funds. Both sectors receive £20 million for capital works. That means that the Government, on behalf of the public or the taxpayer, have invested more than £700 million of taxpayers' funds in further and higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): The hon. Gentleman has a lot to say about devolution but is not there also a devolution of debt? How does he justify the fact that in the further education sector all the loan charges on debts incurred up to April 1991 will be borne by the local authorities but if the assets are sold after April 1993, the Government will derive the benefit although local authorities still have to pay the debt? At least Dick Turpin had the decency to wear a mask.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman and I differ because I do not believe that the local authorities or the Government have any money. They have taxpayers' funds, and I am choosing my words carefully. I believe that taxpayers' funds are merely lent to the bodies involved —whether to the Government or to local authorities—to spend with wisdom. At the end of the day, it does not matter where one apportions the funds because the money belongs to the Government. Debts are merely taxpayers' funds left for a longer period to be paid. They are deferred payments.

Mr. McMaster: In the circumstances that I have described, would not the poll tax payer at present have to pick up those debts?

Mr. Walker: That is not the case. The taxpayers and community charge payers will always pick up the tab of any central or local government expenditure. Eighty nine per cent. of local authority expenditure will in future come from a combination of central taxation and business taxation, and 11 per cent. will come from the community charge payers. At the end of the day, the payments are made by the same people.

Since 1979 Scotland has had a substantial investment of taxpayers' funds. That has led to 61 per cent. of Scottish 16-year-olds staying on at school. That point was made by my hon.Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) who was the Minister responsible for seeing through the House the Bill that made that possible. Sixty one per cent. stay on at school, which compares favourably with the 35 per cent. of 16-year-olds who stay on at school in England. We can be proud of that fact.

Today we can see the benefits of that enlightened investment. Scotland has a well educated and well trained work force. That has been an important factor in attracting foreign investment to Scotland and has contributed massively to Scotland's success in changing from the old smoke-stack labour-intensive industries to today's modern high-tech service economy.

Today there are more than 90,000 full-time and almost 50,000 part-time students in higher education in Scotland. Indeed, in 1979-80, 16·8 per cent. of school leavers in Scotland entered higher education. In 1988-89, 24·5 per cent. of school leavers did so, which makes nonsense of what we hear from the Opposition. To listen to them, one would think that we were not dealing with success, but we are. The Government have set a target of 30 per cent. by the year 2000. That all shows clearly who cares most about what we do for the youngsters who go to schools and colleges, and for the adults who wish to participate in further education.

I go further. Few reasonable people can doubt that the Bill, which represents real devolution, will encourage greater participation in further and higher education, and in training in Scotland. It will also set up a coherent system of vocational qualifications, which is important because individuals being trained or educated must have qualifications that will assist them in the real world in which they will participate when they finish their education.

There will be an increase in grants to the Scottish universities. In 1991-92, for example, there will be an increase of almost 11·5 per cent. over the previous year. That demonstrates clearly that the Government are putting the taxpayers' funding where it matters.

I declare an interest. In recent times, all my daughters have attended Scottish institutions of higher education, and my youngest is currently attending one. I will not say where she is because she would not want me to draw attention to that. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members obviously do not care so deeply and passionately about their children as I do about mine. I am not interested in political gimmicks for children. The extra funding in the grants to Scottish universities—to Aberdeen, for example, 13·1 per cent., to Dundee, close to my heart, 16·2 per cent., to St. Andrew's, another fine institution, 15·3 per cent., and to Stirling, 16·2 per cent., all of which are not far from Tayside, North—will make hon. Members realise that we have a parochial view of what happens at those institutions and that we are delighted by the increases.

In Committee, we shall be given the opportunity to study the details. Today, I will put down a few markers. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will acknowledge that the success of the devolving of powers to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will call for a clear demonstration that Scotland will have a proper share of

the transfer of assets from the Universities Funding Council so that there is no possibility of any adverse effect on institutional funding as a result of start-up costs.

The chairman and the chief executive of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will require to be individuals of substance who are capable of negotiating at United Kingdom level. They must not be civil service placemen who are seen at United Kingdom level as second division material. If that happens, Scotland will be in danger of losing out just as Scotland is in danger of losing out under Labour's second division assembly plans. We must be seen to be putting forward first division people within our plans. Scotland's universities must not lose out in areas such as research grant allocations where competition for funds will require tough negotiating at United Kingdom level.

The Association of University Teachers (Scotland) has written to me making a number of claims. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is listening. It claims that the wording of the Bill is

"potentially misleading in failing to distinguish clearly between the terms 'designated institution' and 'university', and in the correspondingly loose definition of the term 'higher education sector'. Clarification of definition would be"

greatly appreciated. The association advocates definition along the lines of

"section 61(5) of the Further and Higher Education (England and Wales) Bill".

Dr. Hampson: Having spent many hours on the Education Reform Bill, which more or less contains the words used in the Further and Higher Education Bill, I can say that the Scottish draft is infinitely better.

Mr. Walker: That is the kind of reply that I hoped to get from the Front Bench. I am not giving my views; I am merely reading out——

Mr. Robert Hughes: Read out what it says there.

Mr. Walker: The Association of University Teachers (Scotland) has every right to have its view recorded. That does not mean that one agrees with every dot and comma. As I have always done to any body that troubled to contact me and to inform me of its concerns, I assured the association that on Second Reading and in Committee I would ensure that the views were listened to. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries said, what we do in Committee is what makes our job so interesting. We can make people listen and hear, and we get replies that make sense. Opposition Members do not always listen in Committee because they have pre-set positions. They never put forward views that can be seen as sensible or logical.

The Association of University Teachers (Scotland) goes on to say:

"There is a long-held concept in the higher education sector that a funding body should be an expert intermediary, advising government about how its policies can best be translated effectively into institutional activity. The wording of the Bill in 31(3)(a) allows the Secretary of State to appoint a small minority of retired academics to the Council, an undesirable departure from the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988. We would suggest that the majority of members should be persons who 'have experience of (and) have shown capacity in the provision of higher education".

I should have thought that people who had just retired would have that capacity. I have always believed that it was nonsense to suggest that someone who has reached the age of 60 on Tuesday has to retire on Wednesday. Such a person has experience and knowledge. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that I have often argued that point on matters affecting aviation decisions, when the same charges were made against retired people—it was said that they did not have the experience, although they might have been in charge of the whole operation the day before.

The Association of University Teachers (Scotland) supports the establishment—my hon. Friend will be pleased at this—

"of a Scottish Quality Assessment Committee, because of the responsibility of such a committee to advise the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, and the distinctive nature of the Scottish higher education system."

The association says:

"we strongly oppose section 36(2)(a) which gives power to the Secretary of State to impose requirements of any nature to be complied with by the institutions concerned".

To me, that seems an odd comment as I have always believed that if taxpayers' funds are to be used, we must ensure that the referee—the Secretary of State—is clearly determined that they are used in the way that was intended when the funds were first voted for. However, it is necessary to put the association's views on the record.

The association also says that it believes that

"the advice provided by the Council to the Secretary of State under section 37(1) should be published. In connection with the duty of the Council to keep eligible activity under review (section 37(2)), we suggest that the Council be specifically empowered in this section to commission and carry out such research as it may think appropriate, and be involved in the collection, monitoring and publication of statistical information related to Scottish higher education."

The association goes on—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The association will be interested to know that Opposition Members do not want its views to be recorded. It continues:

"a notable omission in section 37 regarding the functions of the Council is the absence of any role for the Council in deliberations concerning the setting of student targets for the profession at United Kingdom level, such as takes place in connection with Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry. We believe it is of prime importance that the interests of Scottish higher education institutions which have long been major providers of education for these professions should be appropriately represented."

Before concluding my comment on the correspondence that I have received from the university teachers, I must advise the House that they believe that, in respect of clause 41 (1),

"the Secretary of State should be required to seek the advice of the Council and the institutions"

before he proceeds to close any institution. The association also states:

"In connection with the Council arranging for the promotion or carrying out of efficiency studies (section 45(1)) the Council should be required to consult the institutions before such arrangement. We would also wish that the Bill restrict the class of persons who may be chosen to carry out such studies to be appropriately qualified."

I assured the Association of University Teachers (Scotland) that I would raise those concerns on Second Reading and further address them in Committee. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, I am sure that I shall serve on the Standing Committee.

Those who work in our universities and colleges of further and higher education must be able to believe that our supposed changes are sensible, that they have been argued and debated logically and that the Government have clearly spelt out the reasons for their proposals. Only in that way will it be possible to encourage the participation—the real devolution—that is proposed in

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the Bill. In my meetings with university principals and with others who work in further and higher education, I have been encouraged by the way in which they have welcomed so many of the Bill's provisions. Although there will no doubt be some concern, in Dundee, for example, I believe that close examination of higher education institutions seeking university status will be required. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) will put the case for Dundee if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When talking to the principals of St. Andrew's, Dundee and Stirling, I have been most encouraged by the way in which those three universities have been working together to ensure that their work within their own geographic area is complementary and that they are not causing one another problems. Such give and take will be essential if we are to see the benefit of the proposed changes. Such an attitude will also be required from the various colleges which, irrespective of whether they eventually become universities, must be embraced as part of the system.

I shall look carefully at the proposals from the colleges in Dundee which have a genuine case to put. It will be interesting to see how they can integrate their work and dovetail it into that of the three universities which are already working so well together in the central Perth area. That is an example that others should try to emulate. I hope that such co-operation will be the result of this important Bill.

6.52 pm

Mr. Nicol Stephen (Kincardine and Deeside): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my first speech in the Chamber. As you can imagine, it is a great honour for me to address the House and to stand here on behalf of the electors of Kincardine and Deeside. It is also a tremendous responsibility, because I am only the second Member of Parliament to represent the Kincardine and Deeside constituency and I follow one of the most able, most conscientious and most respected Members of Parliament that the House has known. I have a copy of my predecessor's maiden speech with me. It was made on 1 March 1965—over 26 years ago—but the memory of his presence in the Chamber will still be fresh in the minds of many hon. Members.

Alick Buchanan-Smith is sadly missed. He was an outstanding parliamentarian, a caring Member of Parliament with deeply held personal convictions and a man of principle and integrity. Many tributes have been paid to Alick by thousands of people—from the Prime Minister, the leaders of the Opposition parties and from many others—but the most appropriate one for me to read to the House came from someone in Kincorth, a council housing estate in the Aberdeen city part of the constituency. That was never a Tory heartland, but this is what was thought of Alick there:

> "Everybody knew Alick. Nothing was too much for him—it did not matter if you were Labour, SNP, Liberal Democrat or Tory. He always took an interest and he always helped out."

He stood up for his people; he stood up for his principles; he stood up for his constituency; and he stood up for Scotland, even when that brought him into conflict with his own party.

Indeed, it was over the issue of home rule and his commitment to a Scottish Assembly that he resigned as shadow Secretary of State for Scotland in 1976. It therefore seems appropriate that the Kincardine and Deeside by-election has led to a fresh and increasingly urgent debate on the future government of Scotland.

We are now at a watershed in Scottish politics. As with any watershed, it is difficult for everyone to agree to which side the flow of history may run. Conservative Members may even hope that the future can be frozen where we stand at present. They say that they can see no demand for a Scottish Parliament, but it is clearly now time for change. All Opposition Members can sense the movement—it is real; it is tangible. We do not know its exact course although many of us may predict it—but we do know that the flow will gather strength and pace, ending in an unstoppable tide that will bring home rule to Scotland.

Hon. Members and even honourable newspapers such as *The Sunday Times* and even the *Evening Standard* would do well to remember that talk of the Scots as "subsidy junkies" with a begging bowl and a "gie us mair" mentality does little to enhance the Union north of the border. The tone is strident, snide and superior. It is said that the meek shall inherit the earth and, although I am sure that even the Conservative party has not yet set its sights so high, I can assure Conservative Members that the Meek approach would certainly transform their prospects in Scotland.

I hope that gives a reasonably non-controversial and, if not that, at least a clear view of my first impressions of this House's attitude to Scotland. As a newcomer, I wonder if I might sketch in some of my other early impressions. It was a privilege to sit in the Chamber during last week's debate on Europe. For the most part, it showed the House at its best. I must admit that I smiled when I heard the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) refer to "elective dictatorship" and her plea that we must cling on to national sovereignty. I wonder which Lobby she would have walked through if she had been a Scots Member of Parliament in 1707, voting on the Bill of Union. I suspect that we all know the answer.

The greatest shock for me as a new Member is the poor quality of facilities to allow a Member of Parliament to get on with his or her job. The history and the splendour of this place are certainly breathtaking and the bars and the restaurants are abundant, but surely it is not beyond the wit of a modern democracy to realise that 650 Members require 650 offices, 650 desks and 650 telephones. I am still between offices and partly between desks. If any hon. Member is prepared to swap my pink ribbon on which I can hang my sword for an efficient working office, he or she should let me know. I will even throw in my personalised cloakroom hook for good measure.

I turn now to my constituency. It is a great honour to represent the people of Kincardine and Deeside in Parliament. It is a constituency of contrasts. It is a huge rural seat, but most people live in or close to Aberdeen city. It is an area with a strong economy but pockets of homelessness and real poverty. It is a place where the traditional industries of fishing and farming are found alongside the modern international energy industry.

During the by-election the character of the area shone through with one further contrast. Despite the tense and important political battle, the candidates from all the political parties got on well. The campaign was a fair one. It was well fought. That is typical of the north-east of Scotland. However, during the campaign all parts of the

constituency were bound thoroughly together by issues that affected them equally. They included strong regional issues such as the demand for east-coast rail electrification from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, the campaign to save the Gordon Highlanders and the urgent need for a decommissioning scheme for the fishing industry.

Then there were major national issues such as the rising tide of crime and the need for more police. Crime in Grampian has increased by more than 50 per cent. since 1979. Other issues included the plight of the elderly and their need for a better deal, especially during the winter months—Braemar in the highlands of Kincardine and Deeside is Britain's coldest village.

Clearly, education was also one of the most important issues in the campaign, but before I discuss education in more detail, I must mention the key issue that worried local people most. It was mentioned on doorstep after doorstep. The opt-out scheme for Foresterhill hospital was opposed by all five candidates in the by-election. The Conservative candidate said that he judged and rejected the application by following two tests: first, improvement in patient care and, secondly, community support. He rightly said that the Foresterhill application passed neither test. There is a huge opposition to the opt-out. There is no community support. Local nurses, doctors and consultants all fear the consequences of the proposal for patient care. The Secretary of State should reject the opt-out without further delay.

I am pleased that the important issue of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill is the subject of my first speech in the Chamber. I am a member of a regional education authority. My parents are both teachers. I benefited—I believe—from Scottish higher education. Therefore, I am pleased that there are some positive aspects to the Bill.

The higher education sections in part II of the Bill are to be welcomed, although they are overdue. The Government could have acted six years ago when the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council recommended a new funding and planning council. That was turned down by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) on the ground that it would start on the slippery slope to devolution. As an aside, may I compliment the Secretary of State on how easily the word "devolution" slipped from his lips earlier in the debate.

Therefore, we have had another six years of lack of planning across Scottish higher education. The eight Scottish universities have also had to suffer the Universities Funding Council which set in train complex planning exercises, demanding a great deal of work by the universities, and then paid little or no attention to them.

Part I of the Bill on further education causes much greater concern. The idea of the self-governing FE college was born out of not educational rationale but the desire of the Secretary of State for the Environment to cut local authority spending and resolve his party's poll tax problems. The changes are being made for alien, non-educational reasons. They are yet another assault on local government, yet another attempt by the Government to centralise power.

If FE colleges leave local authority control, how can vocational education be planned in conjunction with local authority schools? What provision is to be made for the disabled and handicapped? How can a fully integrated system be provided? The timing of the change is also bad. The local enterprise companies—I am a member of one—are still finding their training feet. The Howie committee report on highers and vocational qualifications at school level is still awaited. So the cart is being placed very much before the horse. That point is emphasised by the fact that the Scottish Office knew nothing of the changes in advance of the poll tax crisis and has had to invent educational reasons for them.

Lastly, I should like to mention the position of the Robert Gordon's institute of technology. A major part of its campus falls within the Kincardine and Deeside constituency. It has a proud tradition, an international reputation for academic excellence and strong links with local industry. Yet the Government seem at best to have forgotten about it. During the by-election the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) gave one of the firmest nudges and biggest winks of the campaign when he said that RGIT was very likely—he may even have said extremely likely—to receive university status. I welcome his statement. The hon. Member for Stirling is a member of the Government and I urge the Government to end the uncertainty right now. They have done that for Glasgow and Napier. Give RGIT a clear, cast-iron guarantee. End the doubts about its future and give it the university status which it so richly merits.

For all the reasons that I have given, the Liberal Democrats cannot support the Second Reading of the Bill and have tabled a reasoned amendment.

7.5 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): It is a great credit to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) that he is here today and made the speech that he did. I have something in common with him, although he probably does not realise it. We both fought safe Conservative seats in a by-election. The difference is that he won and I lost. I lost to a Liberal. However, I hope that he will not take it amiss if I point out that the Liberal did not last long and within a matter of six months the Conservatives regained the seat. For the time that the hon. Gentleman is with us, however, we genuinely look forward to his speeches. He spoke today eloquently from experience and, as we all did, I took to heart the kind words that he said about his predecessor, who was deeply respected here and highly regarded and liked. On the night of the by-election the hon. Gentleman made another warm and effective tribute to his predecessor, which we all appreciated. That evening, as the Conservative candidate said, one saw that it had been a fair campaign. The hon. Gentleman deserves his success. He won well, he is here, and we look forward to the speeches that he will make in his time here. I know that he will represent his constituents of all parties as well as he is able.

I feel something of an interloper in the debate, but I hope that the House will not feel that I am too much so. I lectured for seven years at the university of Edinburgh. *[Interruption.]* It is difficult to come into a Scottish debate. They are not so genteel as English debates. The years that I spent at Edinburgh university are among those to which I look back the most. They were fine years. I am also a parliamentary consultant to the Association of University Teachers and I should like to make some remarks about the Bill in the context of its views and my experience in Edinburgh. I have been involved in higher education for

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many years across the United Kingdom. I also took part for many hours in proceedings on the Education Reform Bill.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside referred to the Robert Gordon's institute of technology. In the mid-1970s, when I was Opposition spokesman on higher education, I had the great pleasure of visiting that institute. I was impressed with what it was doing. It took a series of initiatives in North sea studies and oil-related courses which were ahead of what Aberdeen university was engaged in. The institute may not have the full range of courses that other universities have, but that is not relevant in the type of system for which I have campaigned for many years. We should have a plural system of institutions which all have the generic name "university", but which have different niches, with different experience and expertise to offer.

I join the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside in the hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will settle the status of Robert Gordon's institute of technology. When it comes to a decision about resolving the names of the polytechnics that are about to become universities, my right hon. and hon. Friends in the English Department of Education and Science should regard RGIT and Napier college as examples. I have never understood why polytechnics are scampering for a geographical location in their title. I should have thought that the Scots example was a fine one. We owe debts to many famous people in the history of both our countries. Why do not institutions name themselves after a person and link the name to their town if they like? Directors of polytechnics and the Department of Education and Science should look to the good examples in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: As the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, no Opposition Members objected to his participation in the debate—quite the reverse. I recall his time at Edinburgh university, where he taught with great distinction, but will he answer a simple question? I am becoming sick to the teeth of hearing about the west Lothian question. Only nine hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies will favour the Bill, yet at 10 o'clock Members of Parliament representing English constituencies will vote it down. Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that it causes a great deal of resentment and anger in Scotland that such a thing could take place? That is equally important, if not more important, than the bloody west Lothian question.

Dr. Hampson: The hon. Member who represents west Lothian might have something to say about that. I am not the right Member of Parliament to answer the hon. Gentleman's question, for one good reason. I do not know whether he remembers it. I remain one of the unreformed devolutionists in the Conservative party. I experienced two intriguing and valuable years, in 1968 and 1969, as joint secretary of Sir Alec Douglas-Home's Scottish constitutional committee, when such matters were considered. I was of the view then that at least some form of devolution was necessary and I am still of that view, although we may differ as to the extent. When we considered the higher education system in Scotland as part of the committee's work, there was no question but that all the universities, their vice-chancellors and staff, and the AUT were against devolution to a separate Scottish system.

Mr. McFall: To follow on from my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), knowing the hon. Gentleman's interest in devolution and Opposition Members' frustration because of lack of scrutiny, does the hon. Gentleman agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the Bill should be sent to a Special Standing Committee where it should be given further scrutiny?

Dr. Hampson: If I am frank, I must say that it is a waste of time for the bulk of Members of Parliament to vote on the Bill tonight when they do not participate in the debate. Scottish Members of Parliament have to be here. They are taking time which some hon. Members representing the regions might like to use to discuss the problems of the north of England, for example. I would be delighted if Scottish business were being debated in an assembly in Edinburgh.

Mr. Dewar: May I reinforce the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall)? The hon. Gentleman takes a serious interest in the workings of this place and in the scrutiny of legislation. There has not been a special procedure committee with the three-day Select Committee format to scrutinise any Scottish legislation since that procedure was introduced. The AUT would probably agree that there could be much useful probing of the Bill. Would the hon. Gentleman join me in trying to persuade the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—the lonely sentinel on the Government Front Bench—that the Government should consider that constructively?

Dr. Hampson: Judging by my experience of education Committees, the answer is probably no. The last time I was on such a Committee, scrutiny took far too long. The procedure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) mentions is viable and I would like it to be used. I supported it when the House Committees decided that that was something that we should try. Other things proposed by Edward Short at that time have not been implemented either, but that is the way of life here.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: I am obviously popular in Scottish debates, and I should love to answer everyone, but if hon. Members will allow me I shall return to the attitude of Scottish universities and of academics in Scotland. I still have connections in Edinburgh and know that their view has changed. However, we should not be cavalier. They had sound reasons for not wanting to be separated. They saw themselves as part of one community of learning with a transfer of ideas and people. I might not have been a university lecturer in Edinburgh if the system had been entirely Scottish-run.

At the time people were concerned that the system could become parochial, that it would favour the appointment of Scots to Scottish universities and a higher proportion of Scottish students in Scottish universities.

Although in some universities, such as Glasgow, students were overwhelmingly Scottish, at others they certainly were not.

Scottish academics thought that it would be unhealthy for Scottish higher education to become so parochial. They wanted to stay in the mainstream of the world of education in the United Kingdom and to maintain the movement of scientific ideas and links to the computer board south of the border. They have changed their minds, but I suspect that they may come to regret it.

The reason why some of them changed their minds is that they got fed up with the operations of the Department of Education and Science and the Treasury. They think that they have been badly done by financially and will get a better deal from a Scottish committee. I must warn them that there is no certainty in that. In my experience, the smaller the body, the more restricted its funds. Scottish universities might find that there are different priorities and that they are regarded as having received a higher proportion of resources than other parts of the system. Scottish universities have done extremely well and have taken a higher proportion of students than the rest of the United Kingdom system, and all credit to them. However, it is possible that a devolved system in Scotland might decide that they had had a nice time and might not increase resources but trim them back and use them in other areas.

I am not against the proposal, but people in the Scottish university system should not be too cavalier about how the situation might evolve.

Mr. Dalyell: If the English part of the system finds itself in tightened financial circumstances, would it not be only human to think that they would cut back their expenditure over the border?

Dr. Hampson: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are worth considering. On a broader scale, I have always argued that the university world has been put under enormous pressure because of the extent to which numbers have risen. The scale of the expansion has caused many difficulties. Surely all hon. Members have supported that general direction—there has never been such expansion, such a widening of opportunities for young people, either south or north of the border. The scale of opportunities presented to young people in Scotland is greater than that south of the border. The proportion of people in that age group has risen to a greater extent north of the border. In the past decade in the south it has increased from 13 per cent. to 17 per cent., but north of the border it has increased from 16 per cent. to 24·5 per cent. A disproportionate proportion of resources have been put into the Scottish higher education system, compared with the amount that people in my university of Leeds, or in the universities of York or Bradford, would feel that they warranted.

People forget that whatever the pressures on institutions, and whatever financial difficulties they face, we are spending a significantly higher proportion of our gross domestic product on higher education than any of our major rivals, apart from the United States. The figures are staggering. The latest figures that I could find were for 1986-87, when we were spending 1·1 per cent. of GDP on higher education, the Germans were spending 0·6 per cent. and the Japanese were spending 0·4 per cent. Obviously, the GDP is much greater, so more money is going into the system, but that is because in the 1960s and mid-1970s in particular—decades not under a Conservative Government—we had such economic problems that our GDP was hardly growing. By Japanese standards, therefore, we have a long inheritance of a small GDP. In terms of proportion, which is usually the statistical base used by Labour Members, we are spending more than our rivals. Indeed, it would be hard to increase the figure dramatically.

Following my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker)—[HON. MEMBERS: " Where is he?"] I shall follow what he said about the Association of University Teachers. Central to the university world is the destruction of academic freedom, as it is put in the brief and as it was debated in the other place on the Education (Schools) Bill.

As I said when I intervened, I spent many hours on the Education Reform Bill. We debated the same issue then. It is undoubtedly the case that the words hardened in the 1988 Bill from anything that we had experienced in legislation previously. In this and the English Bill, the words have been tightened further. On balance, although I started with the view during that debate that the legislation should be heavily modified, amended or, indeed, scrapped, I concluded that the Government had a case. There is such a thing as financial accountability. These are large sums. It is a requirement of the Treasury and of the law that the Government must be able to put conditions on the money to avoid its abuse.

Equally, the powers can lead to positive results. The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) talked about part-time education. That is one of the great success records of the past few years. Part-time provision has grown more markedly than full-time provision. My point is that it is only because the Government can place terms on the grant aid to the council that growth in part-time education can be directed, if that is desired. The Government give instructions to the council that it will get £X million, but only provided that it is spent on the provision and expansion of part-time education.

Although I understand the anxieties of the academic world that some Governments and Ministers might try to interfere with courses and the operation of the university, we were given a guarantee, certainly in 1988, that that was not the intent. I hope that we shall have similar guarantees. Although the powers look stark and horrendous, they are necessary to direct and use the money effectively.

A further tightening over the 1988 Bill is in the case of bankruptcy of an institution. Some universities have got themselves into a terrible financial mess. It would be wrong for a Secretary of State to have no power to intervene either to stop the expenditure or to direct it towards saving the institution from the dire financial consequences of mismanagement.

That is how I read those powers. Nevertheless, I join hon. Members on both sides in asking my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to reassure the House that this measure is not about interfering with course development or specifically directing money to or between institutions, but that it is primarily to give the institutions overall financial accountability and, if need be, to direct the council's activities when it funds institutions into areas of priority which the Government have determined.

It is worth mentioning that those of us who for years have campaigned to abolish the binary divide now have a Government who have grasped that nettle. Ministers in the Scottish Office and the Department of Education and

[Dr. Hampson]

Science deserve great credit for that. The pressures against it, largely in the university world, have been tremendous and have worked against all Governments.

I advocated the abolition of the binary divide long before it appeared in a Labour party manifesto or proposal. At the time I was shadowing Gerry Fowler, who was having to defend it. The Labour Government went through the same problems. The universities did not think that the institutions were equivalent. They did not want the dilution of the concept of a university. That could be heard all over again the other night from Lord Beloff and many others in the House of Lords. That concern remains.

I have always felt that the fact that these institutions were not universities left them at a great disadvantage in our culture in terms of winning overseas contracts and convincing parents, pupils and teachers that the education would be as good and the opportunities as fine—indeed, sometimes more exciting at polytechnics—as universities. It was an uneven playing field, to use that ghastly term. The change of name at least gives those institutions better opportunities to attract talent and develop as they want to.

One important caveat applies as much to this as to the English debate. There is no logic, I hope, in saying that in changing the name to university, these institutions must change their direction and what they have been doing. Unfortunately, we have a history of precisely that happening. At times we have created new institutions which have modelled themselves on the old, more elite institutions, particularly Oxbridge. The universities of Manchester, Leeds, Bristol and Nottingham, as well as Armstong college, Newcastle, were all community colleges funded and set up by local business interests to be different. It was not long—indeed, only until between the wars—before they were not taking a majority of local students and they were dropping part-time courses. After the war, the external degree courses were dropped at London univerisity. Those colleges aimed to be, and became, more and more like Oxbridge. We set up the colleges of advanced technology because of that, but to some extent they, too, aped the university world, although not all of them have done so. Obviously, Brunel remains distinct. Then we set up the polytechnics.

In creating a single university system, it is essential to retain diversity. Above all, these institutions must set their sights on particular goals. They are particularly good in certain directions and they must carry on in them. I hope that the funding mechanism will encourage them so to do.

Finally—[HON MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I have taken many interventions. I come finally to the focus of opposition from both main Opposition parties—further education. They have, rightly, welcomed the higher education provisions in the Bill. Many fears about the further education provisions are spurious. I can see the perfectly proper educational argument that there must be relationships between the school system and the next stage. It is also perfectly right that FE colleges must be responsive to the training and educational requirements of their community. No one can deny that.

Local education authorities and local councils do not educate anybody. Local councillors are not teachers. They sit on committees. They may have an interest and they may take an active role, but not necessarily. Councillors have been put on various bodies simply because places have to be filled and not because of a commitment. The idea that a college must be democratically accountable is farcical. What is needed is a college that delivers what parents, pupils, students and trainees want. [HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] It is not done by having councillors. People at the education face and those in the training world know. They have connections with the college and its staff and with the people in the community. Often it is councillors and the council apparatus that get in the way of that process. I have known many instances when FE colleges would and could have responded to local requirements. For example, when factories have gone bust, they were prepared to set up courses to meet the community's retraining needs. They have to go through a great bureaucratic process to get the council's approval, the funding and the rest. There is no need for that.

An LEA or a council does not need a role for an institution, its staff and principal to be responsive locally. There is no logical connection. An independent, free-standing institution can be highly responsive locally, and examples of that—above all, the polytechnics—are clear to see. Equally, the universities are now seen in that light. They were more locally oriented after the war, and in the last decade or so they have again become more responsive to their local communities, regardless of any relationship with their city or town councils.

I do not for a moment accept the argument that there must be retention in a so-called integrated system. What we are now doing—we have done it with the polytechnics and we are now doing it with the FE colleges—is giving the principals and staff of those institutions more scope to deliver what they are good at, which is high quality courses tailored to the requirements of their communities. We should remember that if they do not do that, there will be a backlash against them. In part, the funding system will require them to play their proper role. If they cannot attract students to their courses, they will not have the scale of funds to expand and develop as they wish. So they will have to make themselves attractive. Some are already doing that successfully, some less successfully.

We are undertaking the present reorganisation not because there is any perception of failure in the system on the part of the central institutions, the polytechnics or the FE colleges. This is a genuine attempt to allow them to develop further on the successes that they have demonstrated they can achieve. The teaching staff have abilities and all concerned have specialities. We are now giving them freedom to develop those.

I have a caveat to enter, and that concerns sixth forms. I have always believed that the Conservative party was proud of the sixth form tradition and wanted to maintain viable and strong sixth forms. If further education colleges go into the business, as it were, of advertising their wares —attracting post 16-year-old students into their premises because they offer a more mature atmosphere, a bigger range of courses and so on—that could have the magnet effect of damaging sixth forms, particularly those that are viable only at the margins. We must seriously consider what that relationship is to be.

Overall, what we are doing today, and generally what we propose in the English Bill, marks a great advance for the institutions, for the students in them and, in this measure, for the people of Scotland.

7.32 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I join the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) in congratulating the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) on his maiden speech. I also welcome him to the Opposition Benches. I hope that he will be with us after the next general election, and if the people of his constituency take note of what he said in this debate, there is more than a fair chance of that happening, though if the Conservatives can find someone of the calibre of the former right hon. Gentleman who represented that constituency, there might be a different story to tell. Mr. Buchanan-Smith had our genuine respect and we were sad to lose him. Having said that, I welcome the new hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside and congratulate him on his speech. He may have the good fortune to become a member of the Standing Committee which considers the Bill.

It is ironic that the Government had to rely on the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West to speak following the maiden speech of the hon. Gentleman, and perhaps that reflects the apathy among Government Back Benchers. It is regrettable that the Government have been unable to encourage a decent turnout of their Back Benchers on an issue as important as this. I think I see the Minister shaking his head in dissent. I do not want to refer by name to Conservative Members who are not in their places and who are attending to other important business. I can think of at least one in the Conservative Scottish group who could have been here to speak following the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside.

The occasions are rare when my hon. Friends and I have cause to welcome any part, however insubstantial, of Conservative legislation on Scotland, but I, too, take pleasure in welcoming certain aspects of the White Paper on higher and further education. We are, of course, aware of the rather suspect reasons behind these moves, but it is a pleasing irony that sees a Conservative Government, all too evidently without a mandate to rule in Scotland, introducing policies to place the control of higher education institutions in the hands of a Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. That, after all, has been a long-term aim of the Labour party.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) have made clear—in the debate today and in that on 4 November—there are in the Bill plenty of matters of real concern to us that must be addressed by the Secretary of State. Of those, the abolition of the binary divide and the associated creation of new divisions in terms of status, funding and future development are of particular concern to me and my hon. Friends and to all involved in higher education in Scotland.

I shall concentrate on the institution in Dundee that is affected most directly by the Bill. The Secretary of State pointed out at the end of October that Dundee institute of technology would be among those to gain full degree-awarding powers in its own right. However, unlike Napier, Robert Gordon's, Paisley college and Glasgow polytechnic, Dundee—alone of the five technological institutions—was denied the right to back up degree awards with the title of university. That is remarkable, not only because of the lack of equity but because of a total absence of foresight by the Government.

The Dundee institute of technology was designated in 1901 as one of four colleges at that time loosely termed "industrial universities". Its aim then, as now, was the creation of a steady stream of graduates prepared for the world of work and industry, ready to earn a living and to play a valuable part in the national economy.

Like all the Scottish institutes of technology, the courses are of high quality in diverse areas such as biotechnology, human resource management, mechatronics, nursing and software engineering. Further, the institute provides industry and other external organisations with extensive research and consultancy services. In the last financial year, that resulted in a gross income of over £1 million. I need not remind the Secretary of State that Dundee institute of technology was among the first to be accredited by the Council for National Academic Awards and to be given delegated authority to confer degrees.

In short, there can be no doubt about the quality and breadth of courses offered by Dundee institute of technology and of its ability to participate effectively in assisting industry and commerce, answering their requirements and even providing direction towards a more effective partnership between education and industry. Nowhere was that better reflected than in a statement in *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser* on 18 November by Dr. James G. Adamson, vice-president of NCR. Having worked closely with the Dundee institute of technology for the last 11 years, Dr. Adamson is reported as warning:

"not to give university status to the institute would be 'disadvantageous to the Dundee and Tayside economic community and to employers in Tayside.'"

He went on:

"We are concerned that DIT may not be titled a university, as we believe that this would put the college at a serious disadvantage in relation to its competitors, and this would be to the detriment of customers such as ourselves."

NCR is one of the few American companies which, from the start, has placed great emphasis on research and development in Scotland. It knows the worth of the guidance that has come from the Dundee institute of technology.

Yet the ability of that institute to maintain its position and develop its research capacity—not forgetting the most important factor, the ability to attract students and funding—will now certainly be under threat. After all, the Dundee institute of technology will be the only degree-awarding institution in Scotland without university status. Nor should we forget that most, if not all, of the 33 polytechnics in England will be given university status. That will all combine to create a squeezing effect, the logical consequence of which will be the relegation of the Dundee institute of technology to second division status.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said, Labour wants

"to ensure that the binary divide will genuinely be dispensed with and that further divides are not introduced".—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 280.]

Those were not the words of the Secretary of State but that is exactly what would happen.

A letter from one of my constituents, Mr. George B. Fyfe, shows the concern of those who have gone through the Dundee institute of technology. Mr. Fyfe gained a degree in electronic engineering at the institute and says:

"I will be placed at a serious disadvantage when applying for future job opportunities as potential employers will view my degree as being of lower standing as those from an Institution which will be of 'University' status . . . To create

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a situation in which DIT will be the only degree awarding Institution in the United Kingdom not having 'University' in its title is to me completely contrary to the aim put forward in the White Paper, of eliminating the binarised higher education system."

Mr. Fyfe is one of the success stories of the Dundee institute.

I understand that the Secretary of State based his decision on size, but his size-based conditions have more relevance to England than to Scotland. It is an interesting attitude for the Government to adopt. Those factors bear little significance to Scotland, but they are not the only irrational determinants. Until recently, four of the existing eight Scottish universities were too small to satisfy the Secretary of State's conditions. Furthermore, Dundee institute of technology is expanding its operations and mergers are already under way with other colleges in the area.

I am sure that the Secretary of State has received a paper from the institute. I draw his attention to page 3 of that paper, in which the institute sets out proposals that are now under discussion. The Scottish Office is aware that it is proposed that two colleges of nursing and midwifery, with which the institute has long-standing and mutually beneficial links, should merge with the institute. The merger has been approved in principle by the health boards concerned. That would increase the institute's equivalent full-time student population by about 900, and the institute expects to increase its full-time enrolment to 3,250 in the next three years.

There will be major disadvantages because of minor details of numbers which, in a short time, may no longer be relevant. Should we allow a needlessly unfair situation to come about? Surely we should look at quality rather than quantity. We have already witnessed the Government's assaults on Scottish Army regiments in the pursuit of "quality rather than quantity". Are we to presume that the tables will be turned on educational matters, which are as important—if not more important —to the nation? Does the quality of education offered by the Dundee institute of technology amount to nothing? Is size really the most important factor?

Do not the people of Dundee, and the employers there and from as far afield as Perthshire, Fyfe and North Tayside, deserve equal provision to that of Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh, all of which have increased access to university status, degree-awarding institutions with all their associated advantages? If that position is allowed to prevail, the divisions will become concrete. The gap between the Dundee institute of technology and other institutions will widen and combine with other valid Labour party concerns on funding, provision of materials and research contracts, to work against the institute in its determination to gain university status and continue to provide the calibre of graduates mentioned by Dr. Adamson.

I look forward to the Committee stage of the Bill when we shall be able to explore the other aspects of the measure with which I disagree. I thought that it was important tonight to express the concerns of the Dundee institute of technology, which are shared by many others, including academics in Dundee. I hope that the Minister will have regard to those concerns and give a fuller and more favourable reply when he winds up the debate.

7.45 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I add my congratulations and those of my hon. Friends to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen), who made a caring and thoughtful maiden speech. He and I will certainly not disagree on many issues, but we may, in later months, dispute the points of emphasis. I wish him well in his work as the new hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside. As a fellow Grampian MP, I know that he has large shoes to fill. His predecessor, Alick Buchanan-Smith, was highly regarded by all hon. Members, particularly by those of us who represent Grampian seats. If ever trans-party boundaries could be crossed in terms of seeking improvements for our constituents, Alick Buchanan-Smith was one of the most generous hon. Members whom I have ever come across. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will follow in that tradition.

I welcome the fact that the Bill is specifically for Scotland. It stands in stark contrast to what happened to school education, because only one clause of the Education (Schools) Bill applies to Scottish schools. In my many years in this House and in politics, this is the first time that I have seen such a vital part of Scottish education shoehorned into a United Kingdom Bill. That is widely regarded by the Scottish National party and people involved in education as a major insult to their interests and traditions and the care which they register for our education system.

I hope that the Government will agree that the Bill should be referred to a Special Standing Committee, because it is a real opportunity for Scottish Members and organisations to sit down together and review what is happening in further and higher education to ensure that the needs of that sector are addressed.

Before the House votes on the Opposition's motion to refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee, I hope that the Minister will say which Back-Bench Members he plans to have on the Standing Committee, because the Conservative Benches are obviously lacking in Members. Indeed, the Minister is the only member of the Government present—[HON. MEMBERS: "There is one hiding in the corner."] I apologise to the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), but he appeared to be hiding behind the Clerk's Table.

I hope that there will not be a repetition of what happened on the Bill on self-governing schools, when the Minister packed the Committee Room with six of his cronies to legislate against the democratic wishes of the Scottish people and the elected representatives in this House. It is important that he should say who will man the Conservative Benches in Committee, because that is vital to everyone involved in further and higher education in Scotland.

I should be much happier if I felt that the Bill was driven by a genuine concern for Scottish post-school education. Yet again, we are being dragged along with the philosophy of what is happening south of the border. Because an English Bill is dealing with further and higher education, Scotland must have one too. The philosophy that underpins the Bill is alien to the traditions that we know and respect in education in Scotland.

At best, the Minister of State was slightly mischievous when he set draftsmen the task of drawing up the Bill. He has put together aspects of the changes which the vast majority of hon. Members and their colleagues in further

and higher education would welcome, but he has also introduced into the legislation aspects that none of us would welcome. I said that he was mischievous; others have expressed it more strongly.

The president of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Association, Mr. Kenneth Johnson, addressing a meeting in Scotland at the weekend, described the Minister with responsibility for Scottish education as "ridiculous and fanatical"—something that one would not expect the Minister to regard as complimentary. However, knowing the Minister's attitude, I think that he might well regard it as such. Mr. Johnson said that he did not normally feel himself politically motivated but Government meddling in education had forced him to rethink.

"The problem with the Conservative Party in Scotland is that it has either too few MPs or nine too many."

That problem could well be resolved at the next general election.

Aspects of the Bill to be welcomed include the removal of the binary divide, which I have always seen as false, and the establishment of a funding council. However, I even have reservations about those features. I am not convinced that the structure that is being set up under the proposal will provide the necessary foundation for a strategic post-school education system.

Scotland is a small nation with a population of just over 5 million. I have always thought that a simple way to progress would be to ensure that we have an overall view of what we expect to attain in post-school education. I do not know that the removal of the binary divide as presently defined in the Bill will achieve the strategic overall view that is so necessary.

In the 1970s, when the Scottish constitutional issue raised its head yet again and 11 members of the Scottish National party dominated many of the debates in the House, the university principals were very much against the idea of including the universities within the educational responsibility of a devolved Assembly in Scotland. I never understood that attitude, and in the years since then the principals have come to realise that to have their own funding council would offer them a better opportunity to protect themselves from the ravages of Governments who have cut educational funding, and allow them to reach out into the wider world, particularly as we look towards the European dimension and all that will happen as a result of closer political and monetary union with our European counterparts. I am pleased that the principals and vice-chancellors of our universities are now welcoming that facility, but I believe that we must consider carefully how the funding will be allocated to the council.

Scotland trains more than twice its per capita requirements of doctors. Many students who come to Scottish universities to train in medicine and veterinary medicine are from other parts of the United Kingdom. They train in Scotland because it is well recognised as having expertise in those subjects. If the funding council is to consider solely the population basis in Scotland, it will neglect a service that we gladly offer to the other nations of the United Kingdom. We do not expect those students to stay in Scotland; we realise that they may return to England, Wales and Northern Ireland to build up the health service in those communities. That vital issue must be addressed by the funding council if we are to ensure that universities not only expand but maintain the best traditions and services offered in the past.

Clause 31 gives the Secretary of State a free hand when appointing members to the funding council. The Scottish National party believes that the council should include an elected element. We could debate how that could best be achieved, and I shall make various suggestions in Committee. University principals and college heads should, acting as a group, have the right to elect someone to be their representative within the funding council.

I also believe that student organisations such as the National Union of Students and the students' representative councils should be allowed a student voice on the council. We must look at how appointments are made. I do not believe in patronage or that a system should be writ large on the face of the Bill whereby the Secretary of State can, on a whim, appoint people without taking account of academic needs and aspirations, and the wishes of the population as a whole.

I have knowledge of further education issues, as I worked in further education, albeit briefly, at two important institutions—Clydebank college, which serves Oban and Tiree to the west, and Langside college in Glasgow. We provided a service for people employed in social work who wished to take exams to attain professional qualifications. That was an important aspect of the work of the further education colleges.

Can the Minister reassure me that the links between community education and adult education, which are clearly defined at present through the funding link, will continue if the Bill is not amended? If the funding link is broken, the services provided by community and adult education will deteriorate. If we are to crush the notion that education starts at the age of five and normally finishes at the age of 16, we must fight extremely hard to ensure that community and adult education are recognised for the worthwhile services that they provide in the education system.

Conservative Members talk about the devolution of education, and their idea of devolution. Why do they believe that the repositories of wisdom in further education are solely the local business communities? Local authorities are democratically elected; councillors, like hon. Members, have to put themselves up for election every so often to answer for their actions. If the public decide to re-elect them, they do so on the basis of their manifestos.

Local authorities have had a responsible attitude towards further and higher education. I think particularly of the Grampian region, which I know best because it is my local authority. The work it does is much to its credit. It provides courses and recognises local needs, but it also realises that education is not just about obtaining a job. Education also encompasses what we in Scotland refer to as the democratic intellect. Education should be welcomed as a pursuit in itself, not downgraded as though it were solely for the purpose of achieving a job.

Access to education is a key issue. White Papers and speeches in the House have contained many fine comments about widening and ensuring access to education. I suspect that there is not a single hon. Member who, during the past few years, has not experienced at first hand the difficulties of individual constituents seeking bursaries or grants in order to pursue educational goals. It seems that those people often fall between two stools—local authority bursary systems and the grant system—or perhaps they do not qualify for a grant due to lack of the relevant residential qualifications.

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

I know of a young man who is trying to pursue a career at Napier college. He and his parents returned to Scotland from South Africa two and a half years before his course started. At the end of October 1991, he was informed by the Scottish Office Education Department that he would not receive a grant because he did not satisfy the three-year residency requirement. He decided that, with parental support, he would start the course, assuming that once he had achieved the three-year residential qualification he would then be eligible for a grant for the rest of his course. However, he has been told that he must take a year out of his course and support himself if he is ever to have any opportunity of being offered an SED grant.

Therefore, one place on that course has been lost this year and the man has had a valuable year of his academic and professional life lopped off. The SED should have had the discretion to ensure that the young man could obtain a grant for such a popular course. It is the central authority's inflexible application of the regulations which makes it so difficult for us to explain to our constituents what is happening to them.

I am also concerned about access for and the support given to women who return to further education looking for new job opportunities, perhaps when their families have grown or as heads of single-parent families. I am often asked by women in my constituency how they are expected to manage. If they are given a small grant, they lose other benefits such as housing or child care benefit, which makes it impossible for many of them to take up the opportunities for retraining in the local colleges. There should be a special attitude towards women who wish to return to training, particularly later in life when they have raised their children.

It will come as no surprise to the Minister to hear that I have read the Bill carefully to see what provision it makes for youngsters with special needs coming into training and education. I have long had links with the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, for whose work and research I have the greatest respect. It too has read the Bill with great care, and it is deeply concerned that there appears to be a lack of specific provision for the mentally handicapped entering our further education colleges.

The society has pointed out that previously there existed a clear system of integrated local authority commitment to such people. If further education colleges are to become separate institutions, they will not be part of that integrated framework. They will only have a duty to have regard to people with special needs, whereas previously they had a duty to take account of such people. The Minister must tell us tonight exactly how he sees that working out for the benefit of people with special needs in our communities.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend will know that I have a particular concern in that area. Does she agree that direct local authority involvement is of the utmost importance in that area, so taking those colleges out of local authority control is particularly damaging?

Mrs. Ewing: I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend. I think that all hon. Members appreciate his particular interest in the matter. He has clearly spelt out his own attitude, with which I agree.

The removal of colleges from local authorities will be damaging. If, at the end of the day, the further education colleges are meant under the new councils to specialise in vocational education, will they provide non-vocational courses in subjects such as life skills, or will that be left to local authorities which might not have the necessary funding?

If the local authority is to be responsible, where will it find the resources to provide such services? We will end up with a dangerous situation, in which special needs education receives only a token appreciation from the colleges, providing low quality and poorly resourced courses. If ever there was a need for us to consider our educational priorities, it is to ensure that such people are given properly resourced and high quality courses.

In considering further and higher education, it is important to remember those who deliver the service on our behalf—the hard-working members of staff who give of their time working long hours at night preparing courses, who have had to absorb changes in administration and courses with little recognition. During the past few months, we have seen the problems that our further education lecturers have experienced in trying to achieve a sensible pay settlement in recognition of their work.

Like other hon. Members, I have been inundated with letters from those who teach in my local college in Elgin. One such letter says:

> "Over the last 5-6 years FE in Scotland has a record to be proud of, especially with the innovations to this sector introduced by the HMI and the SED through Scotvec, all this with very little if any extra funding."

Another letter says:

> "For the second time this college term I find myself having to take industrial action as a Further Education lecturer in Grampian Region, in spite of the fact that my own Region has already publicly acknowledged the justness of our claim and stated their willingness to settle."

If we are talking about devolution, if a local authority is prepared to recognise the worth of its members in further education colleges, why have the Government dragged their feet for such a long time, instead of giving our further education lecturers the recognition which they so clearly deserve? Other hon. Members have referred to the university teachers, on whose behalf we have lobbied over several years to ensure recognition for them as well.

The morale of staff in further and higher education institutions has been seriously undermined and the Government must take account of that. That is one reason why the Bill should be referred to a Special Standing Committee. That would enable those organisations to talk to us and to make their representations to us in detail, instead of over hurried cups of tea in the Strangers' Tea Room downstairs.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) spoke eloquently about the situation affecting Dundee institute of technology. My party heartily endorses the points that he made. It is ludicrous that only one out of five colleges should not achieve university status. I wish Dundee well in its campaign which I shall certainly support.

It is tragic that the possibility of establishing a highlands and islands university should be omitted from the Bill. For more than 25 years, we in the Scottish National party have argued that a highlands and islands university based on the collegiate system would be a major factor in the regeneration of the area's economy, ensuring the retention of our young people and offering facilities to people elsewhere in Scotland and from all over the world.

Our expertise in areas such as agriculture and forestry would be of great benefit to people in the third world in particular. That would be a major contribution to resolving some of the problems that face us. The Minister should have considered that possibility. In Scotland we should have a collegiate system——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman has only just come in.

Mr. Ewing: I have listened to all the hon. Lady's speech. The hon. Lady is wrong to say that the Scottish National party has campaigned for a highlands and islands university for the past 25 years. The president of the SNP, Dr. MacIntyre, was the president of the committee which campaigned against the university going to Inverness, and successfully brought it to Stirling instead.

Mrs. Ewing: It was a mistake to give way to the hon.Gentleman, because obviously he does not understand Scottish National party policy. The SNP has for 25 years had as its policy a university of the highlands and islands, but that option was not being considered when Stirling university was established. Provost Robert MacIntyre, a former respected member of the House, campaigned extremely hard, and won that university for his town. No one supports the concept of a highlands and islands university more strongly than Provost Dr. MacIntyre.

There are many major omissions from the Bill, which could have addressed many of the problems confronting Scottish education. We welcome some aspects of the Bill, and we will deal with others in Committee. I conclude by asking whether the Secretary of State and his Ministers will again have their cronies among English Conservative Members imposing upon the Scottish people legislation that they do not endorse. If that happens, it will make a mockery of democracy.

8.10 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): It would be remiss of me not to welcome the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) and not to pay tribute to his predecessor, the late Alick Buchanan-Smith. Alick had a rare quality in this House, in the respect that he had for a confidence. If one wanted to discuss a problem with him, one could guarantee that one would not read the content of the conversation in the newspapers the next day, with Alick claiming the origins of everything discussed. That quality is one that many right hon. and hon. Members would do well to respect. I am sure that the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside will follow in that tradition.

Scottish Office Ministers never fail to amaze me. Their illogicality is their only consistent part of their behaviour. The Secretary of State paid tribute to Scottish further education colleges, saying that they were an excellent group of institutions, yet made no case for taking control of them away from local government. Those colleges achieved excellence because of the work of dedicated councillors who, over the years, had the vision of taking education beyond the narrow confines of the so-called academic system and Oxbridge tradition.

That sort of vision led to the development of new institutions. There must be someone who sits in the sunks of St. Andrew's house and thinks up wizard ideas, on the basis that it does not matter whether they have been thought through, but, "It's a good idea—let's try it out." Such a notion apparently gets turned into a Bill without any logical argument for change being made.

One cannot cast aside as being of no account generations of thinking in local government, or that which is still to come. Local councillors are much derided by Conservative Members, but they would do well to remember the contribution that locally elected representatives have made in the past, and can make in future in respect of the education system.

What is the future of Robert Gordon's institute of technology? Everyone acknowledges its excellent record as a first-class educational establishment that is unrivalled not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. We must put to rest the lingering suspicion that part of the Government's concept of developing higher education in the city of Aberdeen is a merger between the university and RGIT. I thought at one time that there might be some merit in that development, but the concept could never be independently examined because the university's former principal, Professor McNichol, sprung it on the educational world without even informing the institute's principal that he had such a development in mind.

A merger could proceed only if a commission undertakes a lengthy and well-thought-out investigation into the merits of each institution, to identify where they complement one another and dovetail, and to ensure that there would be no overlap or waste of resources. Having said that, I believe that there is much to be said for the independence of both institutions being maintained. They complement one another, and in a sense spur one another on to achieve higher standards—and I hope that they will continue to do so.

In RGIT's change to university status, I hope that the access that it and the university currently offer to mature students will not be lost or be subject to interference. Perhaps my earlier exchange with the Secretary of State will have led him to conclude that he was a little precipitate in refusing to meet a deputation from the north-east of Scotland. There was in his speech the hint of a change of mind or of an opening of new avenues.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am always happy to see the hon. Gentleman about any constituency matter, privately or otherwise. Our difficulty was that we were about to publish the criteria, and if we had agreed to meet particular institutions prior to publishing the criteria on which we would consult, many others would have wanted to do the same. If the hon. Gentleman wants to see me now that we are consulting, I should be happy to meet him, to learn his views. When I spoke to RGIT, I gained the impression that it was fairly confident of its ability to meet the criteria. There is no suggestion that we will want to change the criteria in any way that would exclude any institution. That should help to allay the hon. Gentleman's fears.

Mr. Hughes: I will of course consult those people who sought a deputation with the Minister. However, in case the hon. Gentleman is under any illusion, if he re-reads my letter carefully, he will find that I asked if he would meet a deputation comprising Members of Parliament from

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north-east Scotland, and members of Grampian regional council, Aberdeen city district council, Aberdeen chamber of commerce, and Aberdeen trades council. I omitted any representative from RGIT because I anticipated his objection. The institute anyway has its own access to consultation. Nevertheless, I will consult those other bodies to establish whether they still want to meet the Minister. If so, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome them.

One of the great things about the development of further education colleges is that no local authority that I know of has ever sought to impose its political bias on them. It would be hard to exert political influence on those studying for engineering degrees, although that has been done in some parts of the world. However, when it comes to courses that deal with the broader aspects of society and the environment, I know of no education authority that has attempted to impose political control.

I hope that the Secretary of State does not have it in mind to impose Government political control over Scottish universities. Of course there must be accountability, examinations of efficiency, and monitoring—to ensure that courses are of a high standard. That is reasonable, but if a certain faculty upsets the political sensibilities of someone at the Scottish Office, that should not provide a reason for compelling it to change its teaching. University academics can sometimes be prickly and produce reports that are not to the liking of us all. However, that is precisely what they ought to be doing, in keeping an open mind and taking an invigorating look at the problems facing society.

Once we have a separate Scottish funding system and separate control or supervision of Scottish universities, what will happen to the interrelationship between students in Scotland who seek a university education and their English counterparts? Will Scottish students still have the same access to English universities, and vice versa? Will the UCCA system apply across the board? Surely it is the interchange of students from different backgrounds that makes university education something to be treasured.

I never enjoyed the benefits of a university education, but my children have done so. They have benefited from meeting people from many different cultures and walks of life. It would be a tragedy if Scottish universities became small, parochial institutions, concerned only with what took place within their precincts and "twa mile roon".

Even at this late stage, I ask the Secretary of State to consider sending the Bill to a Special Standing Committee. I have sheaves of briefing here: I have heard from spokesmen for nearly every aspect of university life. All my correspondents have made detailed, pertinent points about the working of the legislation. We are charting the future of further and higher education in Scotland: we must think not of the next six months or even the next six years, but well beyond the year 2000. We cannot afford to get it wrong; we cannot afford to let the party-political axes that we have to grind interfere with our aims.

I respect the Minister of State as a combative party politician. That is nothing to be ashamed of. None the less, I hope that he, like me, will take off his party-political hat and accept that we must not endanger our cherished education system. Please let us have the Special Standing Committee; please let us get it right.

8.22 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): Although, sensibly enough, the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) has gone to find something to eat, let me begin by congratulating him on his maiden speech. I made my maiden speech—also on education—more than four years ago, but I know that it is a nerve-racking experience. The hon. Gentleman spoke with great sincerity and eloquence.

I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on introducing such a timely and welcome Bill. Its aim is to raise educational standards in Scotland and to make the provision of Scottish education more locally based, while increasing local responsibility and accountability. I regularly commend the Government on the raising of educational standards in England and Wales; today's debate provides me with an ideal opportunity to explain why the Government can rightly be proud of their achievements in Scotland.

Scotland, of course, has a proud educational tradition. It also boasts what is arguably one of the most impressive and envied education systems in the world. It is a long-standing tradition there for the laird's son to sit down in the classroom with the farmer's son, and I pay tribute to those who brought about that tradition.

One of the Bill's main provisions transfers the general duty to provide the services of further education colleges from local authorities to boards of management, under the control of the Secretary of State for Scotland. The 46 further education colleges in Scotland provide education and training for 200,000 people every year; this year, local authorities will spend some £200 million on those colleges. From 1993 onwards, however, the funds will be deducted from the revenue support grant and transferred to the Scottish Office to help the colleges to become more responsive to the needs of students and employers.

I consider that transfer a logical next step. New college councils have already been established; at least half the members are employers. Local enterprise companies are being encouraged to play a greater role in the activities of further education colleges in their areas. The requirement that the new management boards should include a given number of people with experience of industrial, commercial, professional or other types of employment is long overdue. It is also appropriate for one of those people to be nominated by the local enterprise company involved.

From 1993 onwards, the further education colleges will become independent, corporate bodies. They will have freedom to expand and to respond swiftly to local training needs. They will, however, continue to receive fee income from training credits, and any other income from services such as consultancies. The new funding arrangements will reward effective and efficient colleges, thereby encouraging others to do better.

I welcome the provision in clause 11 to allow existing staff to transfer automatically from employment with the education authorities to employment with the new boards of management, with the same pay and conditions. None the less, the Government are right to ensure that local authorities do not try to be obstructive during the transition period. That has happened in other instances. To cover the transitional arrangement, the Secretary of State's consent will be required for contracts worth more than £50,000; quite rightly, his consent will also be needed for the disposal of land. We must ensure that the possible reluctance of some local authorities to pass on information

to the new boards is properly dealt with. The provision in clause 9 for the Secretary of State to terminate the management of a college by the local authority is another sensible safeguard.

The Bill confers on the Secretary of State a duty to secure adequate and efficient provision of further education in Scotland, including both formal courses such as those leading to higher education—Scottish Examination Board qualifications—and less formal courses, providing basic skills and fulfilling special needs. That is a duty, not an option. No longer will parents be confronted with large bureaucratic dinosaurs; they will be dealing with local boards of management which will understand local needs and local problems, and which will thus be much better placed to respond swiftly to such needs.

Any system that takes account of both the community and the children whom it educates is truly to be welcomed. It ill behoves Opposition Members to nitpick and complain about such a logical and desirable development. The Opposition cannot have it both ways; they cannot call for greater integration of education into the community —and there has been a groundswell of opinion in that direction for many years among teachers in Scotland—and, at the same time, oppose the Bill, and the provision of greater accountability and integration for which they themselves have called. Who better to be responsible for the direction of the funding and management of the colleges than the local community, which will be most directly affected by what and who comes out of those colleges?

I warmly welcome the principle of rewarding effective and efficient colleges. I am all in favour of competition and rewards for achievement; I consider that one of the quickest and best ways in which to raise standards. This is a sensible and logical move, which contrasts starkly with the sole response of the Labour party: as always, that response is to promise to undo all our good work, and to throw more money at local authorities without regard to how it is spent. Knowing the excesses and abuses of Labour authorities, I am always heartened when powers and responsibilities are wrested from their iron grip, and given instead to parents and the local community.

The other main part of the Bill deals with higher education. The Government have sensibly recognised the distinctive nature of the Scottish education system, and taken it into account in the funding allocations to the institutions included in this part of the Bill, as well as those dealt with in the first part. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) mentioned access to Scottish universities for English students and vice versa; that, of course, will remain. It is the Government's policy to widen such access, and to introduce competition and movement.

I welcome the Opposition's general support for this measure. However, I was amazed and alarmed to read in their document "A New Approach: Scottish Education in the 1990s" that

"increasing the total resources of higher education . . . will be the test of any future policy proposals."

Surely quality and relevance have something to do with a first-class education system. I note that the Labour party has made no promise to spend more money on Scottish higher education. However, the Government are spending £500 million a year on Scottish higher education.

The Bill sets up a separate funding council for the eight Scottish universities and the 17 grant-maintained colleges. By establishing the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, resources will be transferred to the Scottish Office, away from the Department of Education and Science, and will take full account of both the higher participation rates in Scotland and of its four-year degree courses. That is another example of transferring decision making to local level and of the allocation of funds being determined by the people who are most closely involved. I do not see how anybody can oppose that.

Higher education and further education both play a vital part in Scotland's economic regeneration. As a result of the Government's policies, Scotland has a well-trained and educated work force. That has undoubtedly been an important factor in attracting so much foreign investment in recent years,with more than 90,000 students in full-time higher education, plus 50,000 part-time students.

Let us look at the Government's success. In 1988-89 one quarter of all Scottish school leavers entered higher education, compared with only 17 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. That is a 50 per cent. increase since the final year of the last Labour Government. The Government are well on the way to meeting their target of one third of school leavers going into higher education by the year 2000. In addition, Scotland has a larger percentage of 16-year-olds staying on at school—61 per cent., compared with 35 per cent. in England. Since we came to office the number of mature students has risen by a staggering 64 per cent. There is a lot of good news. We must make that clear. Opposition criticism—that we are running down education and that we are not interested in it—is overturned by those facts.

The establishment of a separate Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will entrench Scotland's unique position. The allocation of funds will be administered by the funding council, within a framework laid down by the Government, thereby preserving the autonomy of the institutions concerned. It is entirely right that funding decisions will henceforth be influenced by quality considerations. The funding council will be empowered to establish quality assurance arrangements and to make provision for efficiency studies in the institutions.

Clause 33 will require the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council to establish a quality assessment committee to advise the council on the quality of education provided in the institutions that it funds. That is both sensible and logical. It will afford the funding council the ability to assess how well or otherwise the money is being spent. For too long responsibility and accountability over Scottish education spending has been hidden behind a bureaucratic wall of, at best, indifference. I am delighted that the funding council will be able to cut through the red tape and keep a close watch on the quality, which is the real key—not just money—to a successful education system. The unit within the funding council to assess quality will therefore be playing a most important role.

Scottish higher education will be able to compete with the wider United Kingdom market to attract students. The allocation of resources will take full account of the number of non-Scottish students attending Scottish universities. Under clause 36, although the Secretary of State can dictate terms and conditions of grants to the funding council, he cannot impose conditions that relate to financial support for activities carried out by particular

[Mr. Alan Amos]

institutions. There is a limit, therefore, to the financial powers of the Secretary of State, should he choose to use them. The Bill strikes a nice balance between the relative powers of the funding council and the Secretary of State. That is right when the Government are providing the money. It is only right that they should have some control over how it is spent. That is a perfectly reasonable and accepted principle.

Another important feature of the Bill is that the Secretary of State will be given the power to grant to higher education institutions degree-awarding status and that certain colleges and polytechnics under the control of the Secretary of State will be able to become universities. Quite rightly, however, the Government have issued a consultation paper regarding the specific criteria that will be applied when assessing applications for this very important change of status.

It is also proposed that the extension of degree-awarding powers should be based on the criteria used by the Council for National Academic Awards. Very sensibly, any application will be judged on the number of students involved and the breadth and depth of teaching and research in the institutions. Is it not remarkable that the freeing of polytechnics and colleges has been so successful in the United Kingdom that they will soon be able to call themselves universities? But is it not even more remarkable in its inconsistency that while the Opposition support this move they oppose the very similar move to free further education colleges from local control and allow them, too, greater freedom to flourish and expand in exactly the same way?

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): What does the hon. Gentleman know about it?

Mr. Amos: Does the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) want to contribute to the debate? If so, I shall happily give way to him.

Mr. Haynes: Who wrote the hon. Gentleman's speech for him? Did it come from Conservative central office? It certainly did not come from him.

Mr. Amos: I am very pleased that the hon. Gentleman is listening to my speech. I can assure him that I spent both this morning and this afternoon writing this speech. I have an interest in education.

Mr. Haynes: Where?

Mr. Amos: In Scotland, in England, and in the whole of the United Kingdom. I am sure that Madam Deputy Speaker will confirm that it is my right and duty to speak on any matters affecting this Parliament.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) has been speaking for 15 minutes, using a speech that I do not care whether he or somebody else wrote. However, four hon. Members on this side of the House have a keen interest and involvement in Scottish education. They hope to serve on the Committee that considers the Bill. I ask you to bear that in mind and to ask the hon. Gentleman to draw his remarks to a close.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) who has the Floor is very well aware that other Members wish to speak, but he has a perfect right to speak in a debate that concerns the entire Parliament.

Mr. Amos: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall soon draw my remarks to a close. However, may I point out to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) that for three and a half hours I have listened very carefully to the debate, that it is only right that I should make my own points as a Member of the party in government, and that I should respond to comments made by Opposition Members. I do not see how I can be out of order. It was wrong of the hon. Gentleman to seek to challenge the Chair on that point.

In the interests of raising standards we must ensure that no institution will be allowed to use the word "university" in its title unless the quality, range and depth of its teaching and research deserve that title. Our aim must be to ensure fair competition between institutions on an equal basis and to attract students and research funds—not to level down in any way. The criteria must be of the strictest kind to retain the confidence of employers, taxpayers, teachers and students in the new institutions. We should not just be interested in the change of an institution's name.

The Bill will encourage greater participation in further and higher education and training and will strengthen the partnership between education and employers. The Government's commitment on funding has always been clear and generous. The grant to Scottish universities for 1991-92 was increased by a massive 11·5 per cent. over the previous year. For example, the grant and tuition fees increase was over 16 per cent. for Dundee and Stirling, over 15 per cent. for St. Andrews and in double figures for Aberdeen, Glasgow and Heriot-Watt. The funding for grant-aided colleges was increased by 14 per cent.

The success of Scottish higher education will be enhanced and its expansion aided by greater competition. The Bill will bring about greater efficiency and quality in both teaching and research; it will become more responsive. The beneficiaries of the Bill will be employers, local communities and their work force, more relevant and community-based skills and courses and the students themselves. It is a timely and necessary Bill which will raise the level of accountability and responsibility for the education of our children. It will enable them to have the best possible education.

The Bill will ensure that education standards in Scotland are raised higher and that Scottish students will continue to benefit from the sound policies of a Conservative Government.

8.39 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Alick Buchanan-Smith was my parliamentary colleague, political opponent in party and on other policy matters, and personal friend for more than a quarter of a century. I was touched when Louis Jebb, the obituary editor of *The Independent*, asked me to contribute Alick's obituary and I would not wish to add to what I wrote in that paper.

I shall address myself, first, to the Government Whip. Will he seek out the Chief Whip and the Leader of the House and quietly put to them the suggestion that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the Bill be considered by a special Committee? I travelled down on the same plane as

the Leader of the House, who had been speaking at Gleneagles. He asked me about the Bill in detail and I believe that as a former Education Secretary he has a deep interest in the issues. He may therefore be easily persuaded to accede to the request that was made in good faith by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden. There is much confusion about the Bill which we do not believe is our fault. It might be cleared up by the appearance of witnesses at the three sessions that we are allowed. I say to the Whip: please, take this seriously and at least ask the right hon. Members for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) and for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) about that.

Given the constraints time, I shall simply ask the Minister five questions. The first is about research. I am profoundly puzzled about the extraordinary omission of research from the Bill. I cannot find any attempt to address the problem of research and research funding. The Government must tell us, as soon as the Committee stage begins, whether henceforth selection for research is to be conducted on a national or a Scottish basis.

I am not asking these questions just to be difficult. Professor Dale and his colleagues have made me a member of the biological sciences advisory committee of Edinburgh university. Serious people—particularly those who have done well, such as the Edinburgh biologists and Des Smith and his colleagues in physics at Heriot-Watt —are profoundly concerned about the funding of research.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I tried to explain the position in a speech that I made in Edinburgh, at which the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milnegavie (Mr. Worthington) was present. It is as the hon. Gentleman would like it to be. Funds for the research councils will be distributed on a United Kingdom basis and Scottish institutions will be able to compete on equal terms. The money that is dispersed by the funding council will be transferred as an additional sum, initially to the Scottish Office and then subsequently to the Scottish funding council. I think that the hon. Gentleman is particularly concerned about the funding of the research councils, which will continue on a United Kingdom basis.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the Minister for his courteous answer. I shall consider it in print—I am not being distrustful—as it is an important subject. I am glad that the issue of the research councils has been cleared up, but we must consider the selectivity of university research funding.

We must be given some reassurance on clause 33, which places the funding council under a duty to establish a quality assessment committee to advise it on the quality of education that is provided in funded institutions. My second question is whether the assessment committee is to work in tandem with the English structure or as a single council. I believe, as does the brief from the Scottish vice-chancellors—I asked Professor Forty about this by phone on Sunday—that there should be specific national joint committees for medicine, computing and engineering. I interrupted the Secretary of State, who replied "Of course they will keep in touch." I do not think that that is adequate because the issue is two-way traffice in staff between the Scottish universities and universities elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

My third question is on clause 31(4), which suggests that the Scottish funding council should be responsible for the Open university's activities in Scotland. We have all had a brief from the Open university and Professor Daniels, but is it sensible to split any part of the Open university? I understand that there would be considerable practical problems in so doing.

My fourth question is on the notion of a Scottish funding council, which I believe has far more to do with the perception of political advantage than the needs of universities, students, staff and researchers. I was not an admirer of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council. I must say bluntly—I can only speak for myself —that the Scottish funding council is misconceived and, in the medium and long-term, harmful to the best interests of the great Scottish universities.

Specifically, how long will it be before the English body, whose financial circumstances are tight—the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) had no answer to this—says, "Under the old system we were quite happy that the Scottish universities should have a net gain of 3,500 English students, and the finance that went with them. Now that we are separate, we shall educate all our English students in English universities, which will be of considerable financial advantage to our system"? It would be only human and understandable if it were to take such an attitude, to the huge disadvantage of Scottish universities, their fourth year, and the United Kingdom.

Many aspects of higher education are national. I fear that in the medium and long term the Bill will cause tension between the English funding council and the Scottish funding council, which will disadvantage students, staff and research. To pacify those who hold such doubts, the Secretary of State said, "It is set firmly in the United Kingdom". That is not true. All sorts of claims may be made for the Bill, but one cannot say that. It is not set firmly in the United Kingdom. Therein could lie many serious difficulties.

Mr. Forsyth: Did the hon. Gentleman mean quality assessment when he was talking about co-operation? I am not clear what he was saying.

Mr. Dalyell: Quality assessment was my second question. The fourth question was on the advantage to Scotland of 3,500 English students—which, incidentally, equals one of our universities. If the English funding council were to take the attitude that is only human for it to take, we should have to consider where the replacement for those students, and the funding that goes with them, would come from. Whatever happens, and whatever one's views, there will be considerable financial consequences. That cannot be gainsaid, but I will give way if the Minister wishes to comment.

Mr. Forsyth: On an earlier point, the hon. Gentleman asked about quality assessment. He asked how the different funding councils could ensure that they operated in a co-ordinated manner. There is no statutory requirement for them to form joint committees, but that would be the expectation. That issue could be pursued in Committee, and if the hon. Gentleman or some of his colleagues were selected to serve on the Committee, I should be happy to explore that.

Mr. Dalyell: For reasons of time, let us leave that to the Committee. My immediate reaction is that expectations given in good faith by Ministers on the Floor of the House

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—I do not doubt the Minister's good faith in this—are often very different from Acts of Parliament. In any case, let us examine that in Committee.

My final question concerns the two-way traffic that has been so beneficial—as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said—in terms of staff, researchers and students in the mainstream of the Scottish and English universities. We may have a fond expectation that that will continue, but once we have set up two different financial systems I wonder whether that beneficial traffic between the great universities—for example, that in Leeds and the Scottish universities—will continue. I refer to the university in the constituency of one of the Government Whips, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), because Leeds has a great university and I enjoy going there. However, one cannot take for granted that which we have taken for granted in the past.

Truth to tell, I am no friend of the Bill. I predict that the more we examine it in Committee, the more difficulties will creep out from under the various stones as they go on the anvil of parliamentary scrutiny. I therefore end with the hope that the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden is taken seriously. Bluntly, if I were a member of the Committee, one of the witnesses whom I should want to see first is a Scot who was brought up in Dunblane, who did his first degree at the university of Aberdeen and is now the vice-chancellor of London university. I refer to Professor Stewart Sutherland. His views might help us all in discovering the reality and exactly what we are up to. I predict that what we are up to will lead to no good for Scotland.

8.52 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I am no friend of the Bill, which will set up tensions within the education systems. The Government's rhetoric is laudatory—they say that they are encouraging more young people to enter higher education—but if we consider the Government's record in this Parliament, it is clear that they have placed obstacles in the way of young people. The student grant system is not the least of those obstacles.

I have served on Committees debating Bills dealing with Scottish education since 1987. The first was the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988 and the second was the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 1989. Those Bills have not attained the objective desired by the Minister of State, because they were not in keeping with the Scottish system.

Let me deal first with the School Boards (Scotland) Act. During the recess, I visited every school in my constituency —there are about 50—where I listened to the teachers and to the head teachers, and I gained the impression that the Minister's proposals—whether for the five-to-14 programme, for the school board proposals, for the curriculum and assessment or for religious education—were those of a Minister who is once removed from the system, who feels that people should conform to his proposals but who does not know the reality of what is happening in certain schools. The two former education Bills characterise the approach of a Minister who is once removed, and this Bill is exactly the same.

We must realise that the Minister of State pushed the School Boards (Scotland) Act and the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act because the Government wanted to attack local authorities. They sought to decouple local authorities from education.

On higher education, the Government want a self-arching role and strategic coherence, but they are atomising the process in further education. The Bill is a naked political assault on local authorities. We need look no further than the Scottish newspapers this week, in which the Tories—a minimalist political group in Scotland if ever there was one—are setting up a working party to consider the situation so that they can take education out of local authority control and put it under the control of boards.

On further education, the Bill is precipitate because the Government have set up a commission—the Howie commission—to consider the education needs of 16 to 18-year-olds. That commission may undertake a complete review of education provision in Scotland for 16 to 18-year-olds, but the Government are trying to force through a Bill that will change the further education system before receiving the Howie proposals. If there ever was a sensible requirement for not proceeding with the Bill, it is the fact that the Government have given their blessing to the Howie commission to report on 16 to 18-year-olds. It makes nonsense of everything that is now proposed if they go ahead without waiting for its recommendations.

As a result of the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act, the Government established new college councils to run the education colleges. They are taking their powers from 1 January 1992, but that has not even been implemented and the Government are changing the system again. They are making the system more centralised, but I believe that the real purpose and focus of the Bill should be on the issue of coherence and fragmentation. The five questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow were about coherence in higher education. I shall consider coherence from the point of view of higher education and from that of further education.

In higher education, there are no doubt specific United Kingdom dimensions. The mechanisms are required in order to maintain the United Kingdom perspective and co-ordination in such matters. My hon. Friend mentioned clinical medicine, in which limits are put on the numbers of people training, as is the case in computing. What we need is not merely the Minister's acceptance that it would be sensible or desirable to consider national joint committees.

The funding will be put to three separate councils—for central institutions, for colleges of education and for universities. The funds have to be maintained, and higher education lecturers and vice-principals are apprehensive that the funds will not be maintained. In providing the funds for the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, we need an assurance that the Scottish Office will allocate the funds for distribution and that they will be maintained.

We have had a number of submissions and briefing papers from different bodies. One was from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and I noted its wise and judicious comments. The society's concerns were about the availability of and support for research. That concern cannot be overstated. There is already concern in Scotland about the availability of and support for research in the

humanities. The Scottish funding council and Professor Shaw must immediately give urgent attention to the issue of research. If we are to develop our education system and if we are to be of service to the young people of the next generation, we must have the best research institutions. Through the Bill, we risk devaluing research facilities.

I welcome the announcement by the Secretary of State of the abolition of the binary line between further and higher education. However, without a strategic overview of the system, that could come to little. With the proposed atomisation, we shall not get that strategic overview.

We have received comments from the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped about further education. Further education is currently a part of the integrated system of education for special needs, alongside schools and social work services. In my constituency, I have been working with a group of special needs pupils and their parents as part of that service. Under the present integrated system, it is hard enough to ensure the transition from school to further education for special needs students. However, it will be even harder under the fragmented system that the Minister is about to adopt.

At present, people can go, following assessment, to any of the services or to a combination of them. The proposed separate institutions of further education will not be part of the integrated system. The Bill says that institutions for further education should "have regard" to the needs of students with learning difficulties, but in the new set-up the further education institution will not be involved in the assessment of people's needs or in the planning of services.

The Minister should think of the comments of Sir Roy Griffiths when he examined the community care programme. He identified the multiplicity of agencies and the lack of co-ordination as two of the key failures in community care policy. Just as those failures inhibited community care, so they will inhibit education.

The Minister proposes to allow colleges of further education to set up their own mission statements, proposals and college development plans. However, they will not have to report them to a local authority or even to the Secretary of State. That is a grave omission.

There is fragmentation rather than coherence in the proposals. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, the need for a Special Standing Committee is urgent, not as a delaying tactic, but to ensure that we have examined every avenue in detail and that we are satisfied with what the Secretary of State proposes. The Minister would do his credibility no harm tonight by accepting that proposal, not on a party political basis, but as an exercise in intellectual investigation which would enable us to get the Bill right.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said that the university title which will be accorded to polytechnics must not be an empty honour. It will be without planning, integration, funding and, above all, the involvement of individuals who are affected by the change. Sadly, the Minister has not been directly involved in the changes to education that he has proposed since 1987. I should like the Minister to think again, so that he becomes involved and best serves the interests of the pupils, of the parents, of the students and of the staff of our universities and colleges in Scotland.

9.3 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) on his maiden speech, especially as his is the most recent by-election victory in Scotland since my own. It is 50 weeks today since I made my maiden speech and I remember it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will remember his effective and intelligent maiden speech with pride.

I shall be brief, because I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak and, although I shall concentrate my remarks on further education, I should like to say something first about higher education, and especially about Paisley college. When the Minister of State replies, I should be grateful if he could confirm that Paisley college will have university status, because it well deserves it. It has an excellent record, not only of academic achievement, but in research and in its involvement in the local community and with the local authorities. That gives the lie to the premise in the Bill that colleges and business interests must work separately from those of local authorities and their elected councillors. In both Paisley and Reid Kerr colleges, we have experience of the local authorities working with the colleges on economic development matters. Professor Richard Shaw is the principal of Paisley college and leads an excellent team there. I hope that the Minister of State will bear what I have said in mind when he makes what I hope will be a formal announcement tonight.

There is nothing in the Bill to deal with some of the difficult problems facing Paisley college. The hardship fund, for example, always runs out before the end of the year and mature students therefore find it difficult to study. At the moment, some students at Paisley college are on rent strike because of the quality of the residential accommodation. There are outside toilets, but the college does not have the money to deal with that problem. Indeed, at the current level of investment, it will take decades to solve such problems and, although I hope that such problems can be dealt with, nothing in the Bill offers any hope of that.

Before being elected to the House I spent 10 years first as a lecturer and then as a senior lecturer at Langside college in Glasgow. During the decade 1980-90 that I worked in further education in Scotland, the Government's record seemed to be one of making change for change's sake. When I started teaching horticulture at Langside college, I taught the City and Guilds scheme—an old scheme—that was based on specific learning objectives because that was the fashion at that time. About a year later, we went on to a new scheme that was based on general learning objectives because that was the fashion then. That was followed by Scotec, which returned to the specific learning objectives of two years earlier, but eventually that was scrapped after another two years and replaced by Scotvec, which returned to general learning objectives, which have been amended ever since. As I still keep in touch with many of my former colleagues from further education, I can advise the Minister of State sincerely that further education needs a period of consolidation so that lecturers can have an opportunity to develop quality courses. We cannot continue to make change for change's sake.

There has also been a piecemeal development of the management structure in further education. There does not seem to be a long-term strategy to ensure that quality

[Mr. Gordon McMaster]

is paramount in the service. There have been constant changes during the past five years. I believe that there have been three or four changes in the management structure of my old college during that time.

I used to have a poster on the wall of my office at Langside college, reading:

"We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress, while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation."

I am sure that when Petronius Arbiter wrote that in 200 BC, he did not know that it would become the Tory party's official policy on further education.

Further education in Scotland has been the victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Government make changes; the changes do not work, so they make further changes —and so the cycle continues. I advise the Minister of State in all sincerity that he must await the publication of the Howie report on further education so that we can take a strategic overview and stop this policy of piecemeal development and constant change.

The structure proposed in the Bill will be fragmented. Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will look after vocational education across 40-odd colleges. At the same time local authorities will retain responsibility for community education and leisure education. How will that black and white divide be made? There are many shades of grey. When I taught horticulture some people came to classes in the evening because their employers sent them or because they wanted to start a business. Others in the class came because they wanted to pursue a leisure interest. Would the Minister classify that as a leisure or a vocational course? Who should operate it —the college or the local authority?

I have a great deal more to say, but I am conscious that many hon. Members have sat here throughout the debate waiting to speak. I simply wish to recall one event that sums up the Government's attitude to further education. Shortly before I left the college, I recall filling in a form that emanated from a Government Department. I came across a section that asked me to fill in the number of revenue-earning units in the college. I did not know what it meant, so I asked my boss. It turned out that revenue-earning units were students. The Bill paves the way for more of that.

I remember campaigning under the slogan, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance". The Government have tried ignorance and it has not worked.

9.10 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I shall be brief and address my remarks only to higher education because my two colleagues concentrated on further education, although I resent having to do so after sitting here for four and a half hours without having the opportunity to speak because of the self-indulgence of three other speakers who took almost half an hour each.

It would be improper of me not to commend the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) on his maiden speech. I made my own just two and a half years ago, so I know how nervous he must have been. It was a well prepared and well delivered speech and he certainly gave no impression of nervousness. I commend him for that.

I shall make one exception to what I said about speaking only on higher education. I welcome the establishment of funding councils for further and higher education throughout the United Kingdom. However, why should there be only one council for Scotland? England and Wales will each have separate funding councils for further and higher education, but in Scotland there is no provision for a further education funding council. The Secretary of State is apparently unwilling to trust his place men and place women—he wants to keep absolute control in his own hands. There can be no justification for that. I hope that that is one aspect of the Bill which will be amended in Committee.

Higher education will have its own funding council and I welcome that. It is a matter of some satisfaction that the Government have finally accepted the need to provide a separate funding body for Scottish universities. It is none the less a matter of some regret that they have not fully met the recommendation made in 1984 by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council that the council should have a planning as well as a funding remit. I fail to see how those functions can be separated. Surely strategic aims should determine the priorities which direct funding. Without that remit, the funding council will be an entirely reactive body which depends on funding allocations to circumscribe its planning. Tying one hand behind its back will prevent it from adopting the proactive role which is crucial to the co-ordinated development of higher education in Scotland.

I welcome the provision to end the binary divide. But that divide will not simply disappear overnight when the Bill receives Royal Assent. The divide has surely been one of resources as much as anything else over the years. We require assurances from the Minister about what will result from ending it. There is a real danger that without adequate funding there will be a levelling downwards to the institutions which are now centrally funded. The emphasis must surely be on a levelling upwards of standards in both teaching and research.

Within the university sector, the need to maximise free income has already resulted in the squeezing of educational standards. There is no shortage of examples of overcrowding, especially in Scotland, resulting in increased pressure on students and staff with consequent detriment to standards. That trend must be reversed, but it can be done only through providing resources in proportion with increased student numbers.

I referred to research some moments ago. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, incredibly there is no mention of it in the 60 pages of the Bill. What is to happen to the share of research contracts which have come to Scottish universities in recent years? In the Scottish Grand Committee debate in June I asked the Minister for an assurance that Scotland's share of research funding would at least be maintained. I received no assurance then, so I repeat the question now. What guarantees are there that Scottish universities will not lose as a result of this legislation? If the expected number of former college institutions and polytechnics are granted university status, there will be around 80 of them. That is twice the present number, yet research funding is likely to remain static at best. There must be a danger that that will lead to a two-tier system among universities. Those

already possessing a strong research base will be best placed to capitalise on it. As other hon. Members have warned, there will be an unofficial binary divide. If the Minister believes that that will not happen, I challenge him to explain how it might be avoided.

On the creation of a new wave of universities, like many other hon. Members, I fully support the claim of Dundee institute of technology to have the right to assume university status. There is little that I could usefully add to the eloquent and well-informed contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) about one of his local institutions. Dundee institute of technology is eminently qualified to compete in the marketplace which Scottish education has unfortunately become, provided that it has the opportunity to do so from a level playing field. It must not be denied that right.

Several other aspects of the Bill require clarification and amendment, not least the question of resources for the Open university in Scotland and adequate funding for adult and continuing education. Those and other issues will be vigorously pursued in Committee, when the Minister and his colleagues will be required to display a greater understanding of the real needs of post-school education in our country.

9.16 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): There seems to be a tradition that the hon. Member for Monklands, West should speak last in Scottish debates.

Mr. Dewar: A position of honour.

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) confirms that that is a position of honour. It allows me to reflect on the debate. Although there were numerous excellent speeches —especially from Opposition Members—in complete candour I must say that we have witnessed an abuse of procedure this evening. Hon. Members who appeared after the opening speeches spoke for half an hour and then disappeared, have not reappeared—

Sir Hector Monro: They are in Committee.

Mr. Clarke: That is no reflection on the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) who spoke well and made a good contribution to the debate. However, this is no way to conduct Scottish business and to deal with matters as important as education in Scotland. Certainly it is no way to deal with further or higher education. The plea made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden for a Special Standing Committee to consider the Bill might be seen as compensation for the appalling way in which the debate on Second Reading has been conducted by Conservative Members.

I join my hon. Friends in congratulating the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) on a moving, fluent and sincere maiden speech. We all join him in the comments that he made about the late Alick Buchanan-Smith, a man of outstanding integrity and decency and a great parliamentarian who will be long remembered.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will not mind if, in the short time available to me, I attempt to emulate his style, albeit inadequately, by asking the Minister five questions. They are the questions that the Government have not yet answered and which are crucial to the debate—a debate which will continue long after the general election, which cannot be far away. Whatever decision we reach about the Bill, this will not be the last word on further and higher education in Scotland. That debate will continue because we are that type of people in Scotland.

I intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to ask a question, which I am glad the hon. Member for Dumfries repeated: why is the Secretary of State leaving education authorities with debt charges? As hours have gone by since that question was put, perhaps we may receive a more considered, measured reply. It is wrong that local authorities, having lost the assets of further education, should be asked to continue to pay those debt charges. It flies in the face of any decent approach to local government finance. It is unacceptable. Therefore, I am not surprised that, whereas the Secretary of State and some of his supporters claim that everybody agrees with the Bill, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in its paper states:

> "The Convention takes the view that the timing of the Bill is wholly inappropriate."

If the Government stick to their view on debt repayment, I certainly agree with COSLA.

My second question is: how will the Secretary of State ensure that bursaries will tie in with college development plans and courses? That is important. If the Government continue with their proposals, those responsible for the payment of bursaries will not also be responsible for deciding courses or strategy. Therefore, there will be an absence of coherence, which the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped has already criticised in its paper. There cannot be a more important aspect of the financing of students than that affecting students with special needs. I hope that the Minister will clarify the position when he replies.

My third question is: how will the Secretary of State ensure coherent and strategic planning, particularly in relation to post-16 activities in schools, adult education and special education? What my hon. Friends have already said about people with learning difficulties certainly applies. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) was eloquent on that point. Education should be for living. I do not support the view that Coatbridge college is there merely to supply whatever industry may exist. People used to erect notices outside their factories, saying "Hands Wanted"; not people, minds, personalities or individual contributions wanted. I fear that that is the real thrust of the Bill.

My fourth question is: will education authorities receive enough resources through the rate support grant for adult education? Again, that is a perfectly fair question. It is not enough for the Secretary of State to say, as he did, that these matters are already being dealt with. They are not identified or ring-fenced.

The body of people is not to be elected or accountable, but appointed by the Secretary of State in the same undemocratic way in which the Government have appointed their own people to the health boards and ignored the views of local people. In neither Lanarkshire nor Glasgow health authorities—I do not wish to reflect on those who give of their time—do we have people who would have been elected to either district or regional councils. If we are to have devolution as the Secretary of State said, how can we judge the quality of decision taking —nobody has made any attempt to pretend that this is real

[Mr. Clarke]

representation—when those appointed are put there presumably to carry out Government policy as it is seen by those temporarily in control at St. Andrew's house.

My fifth question is: will the Secretary of State agree that education authorities should be represented as of right on college councils at officer and member level? I say that without any feeling of apology or humility, having been in local government. Despite what is often said by Conservative Members, and reflected in their legislation, there are many excellent people in local government at elected and member level. Why they should be excluded from making an input into something as important as further and community education I do not understand and do not accept.

In our society today, when we have so many problems —about employment, the quality of life, the environment and with people feeling that there is an absence of hope and a lack of fulfilment—young people are worried about our approach to education in Scotland. The Government may use the guillotine, the whip and parliamentary procedure in the hope that issues such as that will go away. They will not. Education is fundamental to the realisation of true fulfilment. We will continue to pursue that point.

9.25 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): This has been an interesting debate. It has been dominated by the idea that we have special procedures which enable us to consider a measure such as this in detail. The Bill involves matters which really need the Select Committee rather than the Standing Committee procedure.

I am delighted to welcome to our proceedings the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen), who has the inestimable advantage of having entered through a by-election. It is easier for us to remember the name of his constituency, the hon. Gentleman having joined us recently. I pay tribute to Alick Buchanan-Smith. The new hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside has a hard act to follow. Others, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), paid tribute to Mr. Buchanan-Smith. I am sure that the new hon. Member for that constituency will have difficulty being as effective a Member of the Opposition as his predecessor.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside reminded us of the mess that has occurred over Robert Gordon's, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) told us about the Dundee institute of technology. We believe that the future of such institutions could have been dealt with more sympathetically.

My hon. Friends and I totally oppose the principle of taking further education out of the control of regional councils, and no educational case has been made out for such a move. The Bill is completely friendless on that issue. Virtually nobody in Scotland is willing to give house room to the further education parts of the Bill. It is another example of the Government taking the opportunity to centralise control and undermine local accountability.

What the Government propose is unworkable. In May, it was firmly proposed in the White Paper that local councils should have responsibility only for social and recreational provision. Within weeks, further education colleges, their councils and regional councils were told that they could provide all forms of further education. That showed that the Government had not thought the matter through.

The Government's proposal to separate further education and place it under the control of the Secretary of State is ham-fisted. It shows the right hon. Gentleman's total failure to understand what is happening in Scottish education. The regions have been successfully loosening the boundaries and getting the benefits of better links between secondary, further and community education. What matters is that students get the service, not which heading the service comes under. For example, I visited Aboyne in Grampian recently—not because of the by-election but out of diligence—and saw that the community school there works well, offering all forms of education on the same premises. Similarly, the adult education in schools in Strathclyde would previously have been classified as further education, but the adults now receive the education that they need in what is called a "secondary school".

The Government's attempt to divide vocational and non-vocational education is simply silly. Schools are vocational as well as academic, and further education colleges are vocational as well as non-vocational. Are languages vocational or non-vocational? They are both, depending on the use to which they are put. It is particularly absurd that the Bill should be introduced within weeks of the Howie committee reporting on the upper stages of secondary education, not just on the future of highers but on the relationship of highers with vocational education.

Let us look again at the contribution and development of Scotvec modules in schools. Something extraordinary has occurred. They are designed explicitly for vocational qualifications and for FE colleges and are being taken in vast numbers in schools. In 1989-90, 40 per cent. of the candidates for Scotvec modules were entered from schools. That was a 121 per cent. increase in a two-year period. There is every reason to think that the majority of candidates taking Scotvec module vocational education will soon be from schools, if that is not so already.

There is a considerable overlap in the most popular modules in FE education. They include computer studes, word processing and communication. It is illogical and absurd to divide education as the Government seek to do. How are we to distinguish between secondary and further education? It makes no sense to centralise control in Edinburgh at this stage. We are even to have the absurdity of cash changing hands between further, community and secondary education for the use of facilities. That is nonsense. Who will decide whether and how the regions will be reimbursed if they use their power to offer vocational education?

An English leaflet—there is no Scottish leaflet—says:

"LEAs would have the power to fund further education of all kinds, from within the resources available to them, to complement that provided through the Councils".

It is utter nonsense to have two authorities doing the same work. Have the Government even considered where the colleges are? The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who is not here now, said that the people of Oban would prefer to look after education in Oban, not realising that the closest FE college to Oban was Clydebank. I do not know whether the closest college to Tiree is Clydebank or Greenock, but it is not a matter of the people of Tiree looking after Tiree's concerns.

At the Bill's Committee stage the Labour party will move that there should be a further education funding council. It is essential that we put at the heart of the matter in Scotland people who know about further education. Why is there to be a further education funding council with regional committees for England and a further education funding council for Wales, but not one for Scotland?

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): There are enough Tories left to put on them.

Mr. Worthington: I do not know where the Minister of State will find the 450 extra Tory party members whom he needs to go on the college councils. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, he could not even find 35 young Tories to go to his conference, wherever it was.

The Government's attitude to the colleges' capital debts is an example of how they regard local government. That subject was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clark). It is a full illustration of how local government has been treated in the past 12 years. The Government are taking away the colleges but leaving the local authorities with a debt. As has been said, that is like repossessing people's houses but leaving them with the mortgage to pay.

The White Paper said that it will be complex and time consuming to identify and separate the charges related to college property. I travelled round the regions in the summer. At one region I asked whether it would be complex and time consuming to separate the debts. I was asked if I had a minute to spare. I talked to those in another region who said that they had already completed the process. All the local authorities have already done so.

I misled the House earlier when I said that the total debt outstanding was £86 million; it is not, it was £87,156,000 at March 31. The debt on Falkirk college is £1·9 million and that on Clackmannan is £388,000. If the reason for keeping the debts with the local authorities is because to do otherwise would be complicated and time consuming, we have solved the problem. Does the Minister agree that, debts as well as assets will be considered in Committee?

We support moving the control of higher education to Scotland and the end of the binary divide. In Committee we shall test out the Government's intentions all the way because we are convinced that the Bill's purpose is to level down, not level up. The chasm at the centre of the legislation is the Government's refusal to consider the issue of resources. As students come from less traditional backgrounds and follow less traditional routes, there is a powerful case for more, not fewer, resources.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, we shall also press the Government to spell out their attitude to research. The binary divide cannot be abolished by word—it needs action to do so. The Government are making two conflicting statements. They say, first, that they are abolishing the binary divide and, secondly, that they expect institutions to continue in the same way. The first statement involves dynamic change and the other involves stability—which are we to believe? When the Labour party proposed abolishing the binary divide during debates on the Education Reform Act 1988, it was in the expectation that there would be resource implications to cope with the levelling up required. However, in the Bill the Government anticipate that the financial effects of their proposals will be roughly neutral.

Formidable forces are concentrating research into fewer and fewer universities. Do the Government welcome that? Is it desirable? Will it continue? The Government say nothing. Apparently, there is to be more selectivity in the basic research budget distributed by the Universities Funding Council. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, at present about a third of the income from the UFC is used for basic research. However, in the United Kingdom, instead of about 45 universities competing for the research budget, there will be 90. In Scotland, instead of eight universities, there will be 12 universities and 13 central institutions competing for the same research money. Meanwhile, the Government say nothing.

It is naive in the extreme to believe that polytechnics will simply continue their existing mission. Throughout the world, research is considered to be top of the heap. As an academic exercise, research is seen as a higher prestige activity than teaching. All institutions will seek to add to their research. It is inevitable that polytechnic staff will seek to increase the research component of their work.

The Government may say that some institutions will become teaching institutions, but such centres are not cheap. Good teaching universities elsewhere in the world achieve success by devoting large amounts of human and physical resources to research. Such universities exist in America, but there the percentage of undergraduate or postgraduate students at acknowledged research universities is, in proportional terms, equal to the entire number of students here.

We are falling behind all the time on research. The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology—these are not moderate words—said:

> "We think that the 1991-92 science budget falls far short of what is required to provide the basis for the continuing development of the country's science base."

There is no fat left in the system to absorb or disguise the present crisis. We are concerned about the extent to which there has already been a levelling down. But a central problem with the Bill is that there is no commitment by the Government to a planning function for the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

I received a briefing from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, not a body with which I have had much contact. It said:

> "The Funding Council should actively encourage rationalisation, elimination of unnecessary duplication, co-operation in teaching and research, in innovation."

It should be dealing with issues such as the highlands and islands university. We believe that firm planning powers should be unambiguously added to the powers of the council and we shall be tabling the appropriate amendments to that effect in Committee.

We shall also be seeking to remove from the Government the unnecessary and suspicious interference powers which the Secretary of State is taking and on which the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), then Secretary of State for Education, backed down in 19[illegible]. For the sake of academic freedom, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council must be an effective buffer between politicians and the colleges. The Government do not need the powers and we shall seek to remove them.

It is rumoured that section 77(2) of the English legislation which refers to particular directional powers was omitted from the Scottish legislation in error. I hope that in the short time that the Minister has to reply he will assure us that in Committee he will not include that

[Mr. Worthington]

ominous power in the English legislation which gives the Secretary of State power to direct funds or give instructions to particular institutions. We set up a funding council because it is vital to a free society that we have free, strong, autonomous universities which can question and quarrel with received wisdom.

We cannot vote for the Bill on Second Reading. The part relating to further education is half-baked, ham-fisted and yet more centralising imperialism from the Secretary of State. It is hopelessly inadequate in its perception of further and adult education. The business community has no right to control further education, and it does not want to. It is an important beneficiary of further education and it must contribute, but it is not the customer, as the White Paper says. The customers are the students and their needs. No case has been made for this centralisation.

On higher education, it is right that controls should be switched to Scotland and that the binary divide should be abolished, but the Government are abolishing the binary divide in order to level down—there is not the necessary commitment to make the change work. We want much stronger planning powers for the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and we deeply distrust the powers of interference that the Government are taking.

The Bill will be introduced by the Government, but it will be acted on by an incoming Labour Government, from which Scotland can take great comfort.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) described my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as an imperialist. That is the kind of language that I thought had gone out of fashion in the Labour party.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Stephen) on his excellent maiden speech, so eloquently delivered. I thank him, I think on behalf of the whole House, for the tribute that he paid to Alick Buchanan-Smith. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will enjoy his time as a Member of Parliament and I look forward to his contributions to our debates.

The hon. Gentleman made a couple of points on the Bill to which I wish to respond. He suggested that the changes have something to do with keeping down the level of the poll tax. Responsibility for the provision of further education will be removed from local government, which will not get the money either. The money will not go to local authorities, so the effect will be neutral. There will be no saving in terms of money raised or money spent.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to dispel the doubts surrounding Robert Gordon's institute of technology. As I said during the by-election campaign, when I happened to be visiting Aberdeen on ministerial business, to fulfil a long-standing engagement at RGIT, the only people who seem to be raising doubts are politicians in the north-east. Now that the criteria have been published, we have not, so far as I am aware, received any representations that they should be tougher—and as the hon. Gentleman knows, RGIT would comfortably meet them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) pointed out that this is a major devolutionary measure that involves a vast transfer of power to Scotland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] My hon. Friend is in Committee. He pointed out that it will also give considerable power to further education colleges themselves.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) that the Opposition have been mealy-mouthed. We thought that they would welcome the Bill, which gives tremendous power to the Scottish Office and to the institutions concerned to fashion further and higher education in the interests of Scotland as a whole.

It was obvious from the debate that there would be some division. The Government introduced the Bill because my right hon. and hon. Friends believe in extending equality of opportunity, whereas Opposition Members do not.

Mr. McFall: That is ridiculous.

Mr. Forsyth: I was quoting the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who, speaking for himself, is on record as saying:

"We do not believe in equality of opportunity. We are the party of equality."

He was right. Opposition Members believe in a levelling down, whereas we believe in competition and the opportunity to provide for equality of opportunity.

We heard a great deal from the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Clydebank and Milngavie about the need for more resources before any improvements can be made to higher education. That could not be described as a surprising line. It is the line that Labour Members always take—it is their standard gambit.

We heard tonight echoes of previous debates. I refer to a statement made by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on 8 July 1981.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am sorry that Labour Members are embarrassed by their leader's words. He said:

"It is obvious that the opportunities for higher education are being stolen from thousands who have qualified for it, who have aspired to it and who, even today, in schools and colleges throughout the country, are working towards getting the places that the Government are taking away."—*[Official Report,* 8 July 1981; Vol. 8, c. 462.]

Even more striking, on 17 March 1982, a certain Mr. Bruce Millan told the House:

"Whatever is happening, the one thing that we can be sure of is that central institutions, any more than the universities or colleges of education, will not be able to meet the demand for qualified young people leaving school who want to enter them. In particular, they will not be able to meet the demand from those young people who are denied university and college of education places because of the university and college cuts. There will be no solution to the Scottish problems through the central institutions".—*[Official Report,* 17 March 1982; Vol. 20, c. 363.]

So said a former Labour Secretary of State.

The more perceptive right hon. and hon. Members will have noticed that those remarks were made at the beginning of a period that saw a 40 per cent. increase in higher education for students in Scotland. So much for the cuts and the piteous plight of young people denied their place in education that we were told about.

The Opposition were wrong then, just as they are wrong now. The Government's obvious success was based on a combination of increased funding and considerable efficiency gains.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make progress. He asked a whole range of questions, and I will answer all of them.

The Government's policy will continue to deliver more places for students, generate efficiency gains, and enhance the quality and relevance of the higher education that is offered. The Bill is a part of reforms that are intended to ensure that students have choice, and are able to acquire the skills that are needed. It will also enable our institutions of learning to engage in partnerships with business and commerce.

I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in the Chamber. I greatly admire his policies on education: we find ourselves agreeing on such matters as primary testing and publishing league tables. I wish that he would have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, who says the opposite north of the border from what the hon. Member for Blackburn says south of the border.

Mr. Worthington: We want devolution.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but he must still answer the West Lothian question that was asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The answer, of course, would prevent him from continuing to prop up a Labour Government with a majority north of the border.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No; I want to make my point about the Labour party in Scotland and the Labour party in England.

The Labour party in England has a clear policy on further education. The hon. Member for Blackburn seems embarrassed by mention of that, but the English Labour party supports the creation of corporate colleges. The only difference between its policy and ours is our wish to fund colleges on a national basis to avoid local anomalies. The hon. Gentleman was lucky not to be present for the debate; there has been speech after speech condemning the idea of corporate colleges, which apparently are good enough for England but quite inappropriate for Scotland.

I waited in vain to hear what Labour's policy for Scotland was. The truth is that there is no such policy. Labour has said that it will repeal part I of the Bill, but it is bereft of any alternative ideas. That will not do: it displays complete contempt for the further education colleges in Scotland that support our proposals to give them greater freedom. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) may be unaware of it, but the further education colleges in Scotland have welcomed our proposals.

I think that I know the reasons for the difference in policy between those north and south of the border, and for the policy vacuum. The Labour party's agenda in Scotland is dictated by the trade unions and Labour authorities, which fear our proposals because they would diminish their traditional fiefdoms.

Mr. Worthington: I assume that, when the Minister refers to the colleges, he means the college principals.

I wonder whether he has seen the article by the chairman of the Scottish branch of the Association of Principals of Further Education Colleges, Mr. Craig Brown, who said:

"Even before the printed version is freely available, the Bill is getting a worse press than Saddam Hussein. No one has a good word to say for it. I think the Bill was inevitable. The 1989 Act was such an awful piece of legislation that its successor was inevitable."

Mr. Forsyth: I do not recall a piece of legislation that I have taken through the House that has not had a worse press than Saddam Hussein north of the border. Why did the Opposition oppose the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988 in Committee? Why did they argue against school boards, and why did they change their minds? Was it a coincidence that they did so at the same time as the Educational Institute of Scotland and the unions? Labour does what the unions tell it to do. At least the hon. Member for Blackburn thinks about parents and students, which is why his agenda is closer to ours than that of the hon. Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Norman Hogg: The Minister says that Labour changed its mind about school boards. It is the Minister who changed his mind. He was the author of the ceiling powers that suddenly evaporated when the public made it clear that they would not wear it.

Mr. Forsyth: Strathclyde regional council, controlled by Labour, has brought in ceiling powers on a voluntary basis, and is delegating those powers to its school boards.

I pay tribute to the role played by local authorities in developing further education. Unfortunately, like over-protective nannies who want to smother their charges' development, they have drawn up a list of do's and dont's for further education colleges: "You must use local authority architects and lawyers; you must pay staff at nationally agreed rates, and not reward good performance; you must employ certain categories of staff, even if it means employing lecturers for routine administrative tasks." That is the dead end and dead hand of local authority bureaucracy. We seek to introduce flexibility, whereas the Opposition wish to ensure rigidity. For the Labour party, self-government is anathema, whether it is in local authority further education colleges, in self-governing schools, or in self-governing hospitals. The Opposition cannot stand the idea of people making their own decisions. Napier and Glasgow polytechnics, shortly to become universities, are an example of what happens when a local authority-run institution of further education breaks away and is allowed to take its own decisions. It can grow and prosper, to the point of becoming a university.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said that he was very concerned about academic freedom. So did the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg). There is a notion that the conditions of grant amount to a new imposition, but there is nothing new about conditions being attached to grants and there is nothing new about powers of direction. The Government have always had powers of direction over the University Grants Committee. It is absurd of the Opposition to attack the Government in support of academic freedom when they complain at the same time that we are not giving a sufficiently strong planning role to the funding council.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that the Government must allow the institutions to get on with their business and must not interfere with their funding and then go on to say that the Government are not doing enough planning. According to the Opposition, we should hand

[Mr. Forsyth]

over £600 million a year to the institutions and not even inquire what they do with the money—because that would amount to interfering with academic freedom—but we should set up a body that would interfere with the same institutions—close them, merge them, move them, redirect them. According to the Opposition, that is planning, not an attack on academic freedom.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me why the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council report is to be implemented now: was it not a little late in the day to do so? There is consensus throughout the higher education system that that is desirable. It would have been wrong to go ahead with it, as well as impracticable, while some universities opposed it. Furthermore, the college sector has gained in maturity. The hon. Member for Garscadden does not seem to be interested in the reply, but I must tell him that many colleges are now able to assume degree-awarding powers. The establishment of autonomous boards has led to stronger management. Changes to the funding system have led to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also asked about Professor Shaw's terms of appointment. They are two days a week for an initial three-year term from April 1992. The hon. Gentleman then asked about funding: how the resources would be decided, how much, what the future level of resources would be and what research funding changes would be made. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland pointed out that we are increasing funding by 12 per cent. Resources will be transferred to the Scottish Office from the Department of Education and Science to take account of responsibility for the universities. In subsequent years resources will be a matter for the Secretary of State; they will be part of the block. Future levels of resources depend upon which Government are in power. If, as I expect, we are in power, our economy will create the wealth from which our universities and colleges will benefit.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth asked why the Bill does not include a duty that the Secretary of State should provide language courses for ethnic minorities. Clause 1 provides for that, in so far as it imposes that duty on the Secretary of State.

The Bill represents a major advance in the Government's continued assault on the barriers to opportunity that still exist in our society. We are developing a post-school system that will deliver high-quality education to all those with the ability, motivation and maturity to benefit from it. The life chance of further and higher education will be available to students, whatever their backgrounds or age. There is no place in Conservative Scotland for the outmoded and snobbish attitudes that give to the practical an inferior status to the theoretical. These attitudes are wrong in themselves. They also damage our country's ability to compete and win in international markets.

The Government's radical approach to education is already showing success. There are record numbers of students in higher and further education. We shall go further: we shall remove the restraints on institutions and give them the freedom to compete to provide the education that the nation needs and our students deserve.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 220, Noes 307.

Division No. 17] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Flannery, Martin
Allen, Graham	Flynn, Paul
Alton, David	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Anderson, Donald	Foster, Derek
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Foulkes, George
Armstrong, Hilary	Fraser, John
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Fyfe, Maria
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Galbraith, Sam
Ashton, Joe	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	George, Bruce
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Barron, Kevin	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Battle, John	Golding, Mrs Llin
Beckett, Margaret	Gordon, Mildred
Bell, Stuart	Gould, Bryan
Bellotti, David	Graham, Thomas
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Benton, Joseph	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Grocott, Bruce
Bidwell, Sydney	Hain, Peter
Blair, Tony	Hardy, Peter
Blunkett, David	Harman, Ms Harriet
Boateng, Paul	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Boyes, Roland	Haynes, Frank
Bradley, Keith	Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Henderson, Doug
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Hinchliffe, David
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Home Robertson, John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Hood, Jimmy
Caborn, Richard	Howells, Geraint
Callaghan, Jim	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hoyle, Doug
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Canavan, Dennis	Illsley, Eric
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Ingram, Adam
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Janner, Greville
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Johnston, Sir Russell
Clelland, David	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Cohen, Harry	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Kennedy, Charles
Corbett, Robin	Kilfoyle, Peter
Cousins, Jim	Kirkwood, Archy
Cox, Tom	Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Crowther, Stan	Lamond, James
Cryer, Bob	Leadbitter, Ted
Cummings, John	Leighton, Ron
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Cunningham, Dr John	Lewis, Terry
Dalyell, Tam	Litherland, Robert
Darling, Alistair	Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Loyden, Eddie
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	McAllion, John
Dewar, Donald	McAvoy, Thomas
Dixon, Don	McCartney, Ian
Dobson, Frank	Macdonald, Calum A.
Doran, Frank	McFall, John
Douglas, Dick	McKelvey, William
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.	McLeish, Henry
Dunnachie, Jimmy	McMaster, Gordon
Eadie, Alexander	McNamara, Kevin
Eastham, Ken	McWilliam, John
Enright, Derek	Madden, Max
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Marek, Dr John
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Fatchett, Derek	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Faulds, Andrew	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Fearn, Ronald	Martlew, Eric
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Maxton, John
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	Meacher, Michael
Fisher, Mark	Meale, Alan

Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ys)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*

Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Dewar.]*

The House divided: Ayes, 222 Noes 303.

Division No. 18] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ames, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.
Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act; and
(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

PETITION

RU486

10.27 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I wish to present a petition signed by 300 people who attended the LIFE national conference at Leamington Spa—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members not remaining for the petition and the Adjournment debate please leave the Chamber quietly?

Mr. Hargreaves: They wish to express their concern at the licensing of the drug RU486, which, far from being a simple advance for women's liberation, is still an experimental drug with known and unknown risks to women. The signatories

deplore the fact that this drug causes the death of unborn human beings, and . . . express . . . grave concern that it will damage women physically and psychologically.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House, which is committed to upholding respect for human life and protection of the weak and vulnerable, will do everything possible to prevent the distribution and use of . . . RU486 and any other drugs which, like it, are produced with the deliberate intention of destroying innocent human life.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Aborted Babies (Disposal)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful for the opportunity of raising on the Adjournment tonight the methods of disposal of the human remains of aborted babies. It is the subject of early-day motion 79, which is jointly sponsored by myself and Members in all parts of the House, including the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) and the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine).

I know that it is the intention of the Father of the House, who is the president of the all-party Pro-Life group, to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that it will also be possible for the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), the chairman of the group, and other hon. Members to participate in the debate. I am grateful to the hon. Members who have supported me by being here this evening to show their abhorrence of current practices in abortion clinics and national health service hospitals.

To place the debate in context, it is worth recording that, this year alone, abortionism will be responsible for more deaths than malnutrition, hunger and poverty combined. In Britain, it totals 184,000 deaths—some 600 unborn babies killed each and every day. Apart from the ethical questions raised by that massive number of abortions, there is also the practical question of the disposal of their remains.

Earlier this year, I complained to the chief environmental health officer of Liverpool city council, Mr. Glyn Thompson, about the use of an incinerator at the Parkfield road abortion clinic in Sefton Park in my constituency. In answer to my inquiries about the incinerator, he replied on 19 November:

"This incinerator does not meet current standards and so there is no question of the facility being used with the Council's approval."

Residents in the area had complained about the high level of air pollution.

In September, new regulations were introduced to control the use of incinerators. When the incinerator no longer seemed to be being used, I went with Councillor John Livingston, a local Labour councillor and Pro-Life supporter, to ask the public health investigators what methods were being used to dispose of the remains of aborted children. It was then that the public health inspectors notified me that a macerator was being used. For hon. Members who do not know what that entails, I shall explain. A macerator is a grinding machine. The remains of aborted babies are placed in a macerator, pulped and ground down and then discharged into the neighbourhood's sewers and drains.

I wrote to the National Rivers Authority. Dr. Leeming, the environmental quality manager, replying to my constituent, Mr. Cooney of Hadassah grove, who also wrote complaining, said that he shared my concern, but that the matter was entirely for North West Water. I then wrote to Mr. Brian Alexander, the managing director, who said:

"We would normally seek to use our influence to prevent or stop a practice which we believed might offend our customers or the community.

As you know, this is the action we were proposing in this particular case, and there was an immediate cessation of the practice."

I also tabled questions to the Minister, who unfortunately is unable to be here this evening. I am pleased to see the Under-Secretary who will reply to the debate.

I received a further letter from Mr. Brian Alexander, again via Mr. Cooney, dated 18 November. In it, Mr. Alexander said:

"I doubt the existence of such evidence and therefore our ability to sustain any action."

In answer to the question whether it was possible to prosecute those responsible for discharging the remains into the local sewers, he said:

"It is clear that the present legislation with which we are concerned is not designed to deal with this type of issue. In the circumstances we have expressed these views to the Department of Health."

Meanwhile, in answer to the questions I tabled, the Minister said of maceration:

"This method has been used in a small number of private sector approved places since the early 1970s."—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1991; Vol. 198 c. 105.]

It is extraordinary that North West Water says that it did not have sufficient evidence to prosecute and that the Department, having been notified by North West Water, admitted that this method has been in use since 1970 but it had been unable and sufficiently unconcerned about the problem to do anything whatever about it.

Although the Minister promised an immediate cessation, that will not be implemented in some cases until next January. Nor do we know how it will be enforced. I hope that the Under-Secretary will turn his mind to that when he replies.

Although I was told in a parliamentary reply on 8 November that that method of disposal was no longer considered appropriate, the Minister told me that compliance would be further monitored through regular, unannounced inspections by the Department's medical, nursing and investigative officers. But if the same methods will be used as have been for the last 21 years, it is difficult to have much confidence in that watchdog carrying out the monitoring exercise. The very people who have been responsible for allowing those practices will, we are told, be responsible in the future.

What now? If incineration is to be the preferred method, as I was told on 5 November in answer to another parliamentary question, and if incineration is to replace maceration, what issues does that pose? This clinic, Parkfield road, has hired a waste disposal company, Quick Ways Waste of Coburg dock, which every day takes shipments of unborn babies—about 500 in the last month from that clinic alone—to Walton hospital in Liverpool, which in turn charges the national health service 50p per sack of human remains, which are then incinerated on the premises at Walton hospital.

I wish to quiz the Minister on the conscience clause, a matter to which, I understand, the hon. Member for Congleton will refer in due course. In a letter dated 13 November of this year, the district general manager of South Sefton (Merseyside) health authority, said:

"The 'conscience' clause in the Abortion Act applies only to those staff who might be participating in treatment."

In other words, ancillary staff—porters and operators of furnaces and incinerators—have no protection whatever in this matter. When does the Minister intend to do something about the recommendations of the Select Committee on Health—the Chairman of which, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), I am glad to see in his place—which recommended last year that the conscience clause should be extended to cover ancillary workers?

When will the recommendations of the Polkinghorne committee be implemented? That committee reported to the Department during consideration of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. Polkinghorne said:

"A foetus is entitled to respect, according it a status broadly comparable with that of a living person."

Who can honestly believe that the grinding and pulping of the unborn child and the discharge of its remains into the public sewers like human excrement constitutes dignity or respect?

In many countries—for example, Sweden, Italy and the United States—there is legislation requiring the unborn to be treated with respect. Fifteen states in America require that the unborn who are aborted or miscarried shall be buried or cremated and not tossed into an incinerator with hospital waste, which is precisely what is happening at Walton hospital. I hope that the Minister will address that point too when he replies. There are in the United States 90-day jail sentences and $700 fines for people found breaking that law.

What are the health implications for the communities living in and around the locations where incinerators are located? That is another matter that must be addressed by the Department, for I became interested in the issue in the first place because of complaints from people living in neighbourhoods near clinics which were using what the chief environmental health officer described as "unsatisfactory incineration methods".

In the last 24 hours, I have heard from Merseyside hospital workers and NUPE officials that they have been asked to handle and incinerate the remains of babies who have been perfectly formed. They question why they should be forced to do other people's dirty work.

All life is precious. If, on these supreme human rights questions, this Parliament does not insist on the dignity and respect to which the unborn are entitled, what right will we have to be taken seriously on any other occasion when we demand that human rights must be respected?

10.39 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): The House is deeply indebted to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for raising a matter that so far has been dealt with behind closed doors. Now that it is out in the open, it will truly shock the nation. There can be no doubt that, without the hon. Gentleman's initiative, the House would never have heard of the manner in which aborted babies were being disposed of at the Parkfield road clinic in Merseyside, run by the Pregnancy Advisory Service, which on many occasion I have heard spokesmen of the Department of Health referring to as a charity.

The Minister for Health is not here to answer the hon. Gentleman's grave charge. No doubt the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will confirm that she changed the guidelines earlier this year. Henceforward, incineration in abortion clinics would be upgraded, since those in use previously were no longer considered adequate for their grisly task. Inquiries revealed that the Merseyside nursing home had followed instructions and has discarded its

[Sir Bernard Braine]

incinerator. Instead of upgrading the equipment, it was replaced with a macerator which minced to pieces the aborted babies and sluiced them down the local sewer.

Can the Parliamentary Under-Secretary possibly imagine the horror of those in Liverpool when they discovered what was being done with the connivance of my hon. Friend's Department? I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary realises that that practice offends against every conceivable standard of human decency. I feel bound to ask him, therefore, a number of questions.

First, what follow-up inquiries were made by the Department of Health to ensure that the Minister's instruction about incineration had been carried out? We know that no inquiries were made in Merseyside, but I want to know what was done in every other health authority in the country. We are entitled to know.

Secondly, what was the reason for ordering abortion clinic incinerators to be upgraded? Was it anything to do with the fact that the existing incinerators might no longer be adequate for the disposal of late aborted babies, where a recognisable little human would be thrust into the flames? What was the reason for the so-called upgrading? Let us be told.

Thirdly, it is bad enough that daily we destroy the lives of 600 unborn babies, but now, by treating their remains like effluent or sending them up in smoke, we show the depravity and the degradation that are the hallmarks of the abortion industry.

It appears that the Merseyside clinic had not invested in an upgraded incinerator, but had instead hired the services of an industrial waste disposal company, which collects the aborted babies and takes them to be incinerated at Walton hospital—which, ironically, does not carry out abortions. I am told that, for that service, the company charges the hospital 50p for each bag to be incinerated. Is that an improvement on macerators? Is this the pattern elsewhere in the country? This House wants to know. We need to know what is going on.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill reminded us that the Polkinghorne committee said that the remains of the unborn were entitled to the same treatment as human cadavers and were to be treated with respect and dignity. The Polkinghorne committee also said that mothers should be asked in advance how they wanted their babies to be treated. I hope that the Under-Secretary will say whether the mother will in future be asked that question, and whether proper burial arrangements will be made in future, as they are in the United States. I hope too that he will say whether an independent watchdog will be established, and what action will be taken to prosecute those who have been responsible for these degrading practices.

This is a shameful story, and nothing but a full inquiry and a truthful report to the House will suffice. If I were the Under-Secretary—I once held that office—I would resign.

10.43 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I am most grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for allowing me to contribute briefly to this evening's debate. As chairman of the all-party Pro-Life group, I can say that the subject is of great concern to many right hon. and hon. Members.

In 1989 deep concern was also generated by the news that the brain cells of aborted babies were being used in controversial new treatments for Parkinson's disease. As a result, the Secretary of State for Health commissioned the Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne, Dean of Trinity hall, Cambridge, to chair a committee to consider the ethical questions that that raised.

Dr. Polkinghorne and his committee studied the matter and made several recommendations which, although lacking the force of law, nevertheless bear consideration now. The committee observed:

"Central to our understanding is the acceptance of a special status for the living human fetus at every stage of its development".

The committee went on to say that respect for the living foetus carries over in

"a modified fashion to the dead fetus, in a way analogous to the respect we afford to a human cadaver on the basis of its having been the body of a human person."

It is hard to envisage a mother consenting to the remains of her unborn child being ground to pieces and flushed into the public sewer. Such a method of disposal of foetal remains flies directly in the face of the spirit of respect for the dead foetus which the Polkinghorne report espoused. It is gruesome in the extreme.

My feelings of deep concern are aroused both for the mother, who may subsequently realise the horror of what was done with the remains of her child and suffer unspeakable anguish as a result, and for the ancillary workers who face the task of carrying out the procedure. The Government have refused to bring ancillary workers within the scope of the protection afforded by the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967, despite the recommendation of the Social Services Committee which in its 10th report of the 1989-90 Session recommended:

"The Department of Health considers extending the provisions of section 4 of the 1967 Act to cover some Ancillary staff".

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): My hon. Friend will be aware that the complaint which led the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) to raise the matter was made by NUPE hospital workers who do not want to be placed in such a position. Perhaps we should be doing something for them.

Mrs. Winterton: That is precisely why the committee recommended that those workers should be included under the conscience clause. Most ordinary people are revolted by what those workers have to do. A woman's right to choose is lauded throughout the land, but if people realised that others had to clear up the remains of the dead babies they would think more clearly about it at the beginning.

The Department of Health is responsible for protecting ancillary workers against pressure to be involved in procedures to which they conscientiously object. It was unacceptable and cowardly of the Minister to respond to the Select Committee's recommendation by hiding behind a facade and arguing that matters relating to abortion should be left to private Member's legislation.

10.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), I express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Liverpool,

Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for raising this subject, not only this evening but in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, giving her the opportunity to deal with the maceration aspects. Her action clearly has the support of the three hon. Members who have spoken in this debate and reflects the view that would be held by any right-thinking person approaching the problem.

As the hon. Member for Mossley Hill rightly said, the issue before the House is not the main issue of the law governing the availability of abortions, but the practical consequences of the decisions that the House has taken over the years on the formulation of abortion law. The practical consequences are as distasteful to anyone considering the implications of the subject under discussion as the subject of abortion itself.

We must deal with the relatively narrow issue of how to deal with the unavoidably distasteful consequences of abortion laws, to which all hon. Members who have spoken are vehemently and passionately opposed. The correspondence of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill provided the Minister of State with an opportunity to change the public standards enforced on those responsible for carrying out the distasteful task of disposing of foetal remains.

The hon. Gentleman asked why a small minority of water authorities had allowed the maceration process to continue over a period of years. I am advised that no narrowly defined health hazard arises from the process. However, that in no way invalidates the proposition that an issue of public taste and standards arises from that method of disposal, and it was the acceptance of that which led my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to intervene in the way she did.

My hon. Friend's intervention was motivated and governed by precisely the approach adopted by the Polkinghorne committee—that the disposal of foetal remains should be governed by the principle that foetal remains had before abortion the potential for developing into fully fledged human life and are entitled to the respect that any common-sense approach—not to mention any vaguely religious approach—to the subject must require public authorities to observe.

As a consequence of the correspondence with the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health imposed a new public standard on the disposal of foetal remains—precisely the approach that has been pressed upon me by the hon. Gentleman and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton, that that disposal should be informed by the approach adopted by the Polkinghorne report. That is not in dispute.

I was asked how the changed public standard that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health introduced would be enforced. The answer is twofold. First, as it concerns NHS institutions, it is enforced by guidelines issued by the NHS Management Executive, a copy of which I have before me, which is headed:

"Action. As soon as possible and no later than 1 January 1992, NHS authorities and trusts must ensure that"—

then there are three propositions, first

"account is taken of any personal wishes which have been expressed about the disposal of the foetus".

That answers the point put to me about the concern of the mother.

Mr. Alton: It does not entirely answer that point. It says that if wishes are expressed by the mother they will be taken into account. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) asked whether the mother would be asked.

Mr. Dorrell: I would not give the assurance that in every case the mother will be asked. We should remember that mothers who go for an abortion do not take the same interest in the subject as perhaps the hon. Gentleman and every other hon. Member might. None the less, where a personal view is expressed the guidance is clear—that the NHS has an obligation to take that into account.

Secondly, the guidance says that, subject to the views expressed by the mother about the disposal of the foetus, all foetuses and foetal tissue from the termination of a pregnancy must be incinerated. Thirdly, prior to incineration, all foetuses and foetal tissue must be stored in a secure and opaque container in a safe place.

The enforcement mechanism is the management guidance issued by the Management Executive for NHS hospitals.

Mr. Alton: What about the issue of separation and the conscience clause for hospital workers? Surely the remains of unborn children should be removed from the garbage that is in the incinerator or which may be put into the incinerator at the same time. Surely the Minister would accept that.

Mr. Dorrell: I am coming to the point about the conscience clause, but I wish first to deal with enforcement in relation to the private sector institutions, which is obviously a large part of the issue raised by the question. As to that, a letter was addressed to all approved places and registered bureaux under the abortion law. I will not read it to the House in its entirety, because if I do I shall be unable to cover the other points. However, the key paragraph states categorically:

"Compliance with this letter is a requirement for continued approval under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967."

Both as regards NHS management guidance and the licensing system for approved places for abortions, action has been taken to ensure that the raised public standards that my hon. Friend the Minister of State introduced will be observed and met.

As to the conscience clause, it was correctly stated that the Select Committee pointed out that the existing state of the law provides a conscience clause for medical staff but not for non-medical staff in regard to the disposal of foetal remains. The Government's response has already been published, and states clearly that the Government consider that the changes in primary legislation on that subject should be carried forward by private Members' legislation—

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Rubbish.

Mr. Dorrell: —just as the original conscience clause was put on the statute book by private Members' legislation.

Sir Bernard Braine: That is cowardly.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend may regard that as cowardly, but the House has a long tradition of approaching such issues on the basis of private Members' legislation. Effective, even half-sensitive management in the health service should ensure that people who have a conscience clause as a management action are not required

[Mr. Dorrell]

to undertake the disposal of foetal remains or to be involved in the necessary consequences of the abortion decision taken by the House.

Proposals to change statute law—primary legislation—on the conditions surrounding abortion is something that the House has always dealt with by private Members' legislation. That cannot come as a surprise to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), because it was clearly stated in the Government's response to that Select Committee.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: I tried to introduce a private Member's Bill to allow the conscience clause for ancillary workers, but it was killed by the Government.

Mr. Winterton: What about that?

Mr. Dorrell: If my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) secured time for such a Bill in a private Members' ballot, I am surprised to hear that the Government took action to kill it. If, on the other hand, my hon. Friend introduced a ten-minute Bill at the end of a Session, he will know that other considerations will have informed decisions taken at that time.

If any right hon. or hon. Member draws a place in a ballot for private Members' Bills in seeking to introduce legislation to provide a conscience clause for ancillary staff in the health service of the kind that we are debating, that matter would be dealt with by a free vote on which the Government would not take a view.

Mr. Winterton: Who is pulling the wool?

Mr. Dorrell: I must tell my hon. Friend that I am not sure. I am stating clearly that the Government would not seek to intervene in a decision taken by the House on a proposal of the kind just suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn.

Sir Bernard Braine: I mentioned American law on the subject. Why do the Government not have the courage to follow the example set by our American cousins—or, for that matter, by any civilised country?

Mr. Dorrell: I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn that, as a private Member, I would certainly support a measure of the kind that he proposed. As a Government Minister, we have a long tradition in this country—separate from the tradition in the United States, that matters relating to abortion are handled by private Members' legislation——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF EDINBURGH DISTRICT COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to City of Edinburgh District Council; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 3 December and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Strathclyde Regional Council; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 3 December and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Investment

1. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to combat short-termism among investors in British industry.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): The most effective way of avoiding short-termism is to defeat inflation, a task which this Government are well on the way to achieving.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister recall that, after collapsing by 30 per cent. at the start of the last decade, manufacturing investment took the rest of the decade to return to its starting point? Now it has collapsed by 20 per cent. again. Will he explain to industrialists why they should risk their long-term capital on economic forecasts from Ministers who cannot get them right even three months ahead?

Mr. Lilley: The right hon. Gentleman forgets that manufacturing output fell under the last Labour Government and has risen under this Government. Figures in the CBI report show that manufacturing output in the past decade, at precisely the same point in the economic cycle, is up by a quarter, investment is up by a third, productivity is up by a half and manufactured exports are up by nearly three quarters.

Mr. Norris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the key to short-termism can often be found in the contracts which senior executives and directors write for themselves, concentrating on achieving short-term profit objectives to sustain a share price? Does he agree that there is an important role in publicly quoted company board rooms for non-executive directors to ensure that companies' long-term interests are reflected in management agreements with senior executives?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Shareholders should certainly take that factor into account when considering the performance of managers. In the long run, most shareholders, which are institutions investing on our behalf, must take a long-term view because they invest for our pensions and life assurance policies over the long term. Their interest, therefore, relies on long-term investments for long-term success, just as industry does.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Minister confirm that in the Prime Minister's first year, far from escaping from short-termism, 45,000 businesses have gone under, 70,000 homes have been repossessed, 700,000 more people have lost their jobs and manufacturing investment has fallen by £2 billion this year and, according to the CBI, will fall by another £400 million even in 1992? Is not the ultimate in short-termism the Government's failure to listen to the widespread demand from industry for a long-term industrial policy for Britain? As the Prime Minister has done nothing to change that policy in his first year, is not Majorism simply Thatcherism without the courage of her convictions?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman illustrates perfectly the short-termism of the Labour Front Bench. His question was based on a 12-month view.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Why should businesses want the Government to dictate industrial policy? Why should short-termism be a feature of investment which the Government can influence? Surely it is up to boards of directors, executives and investment managers to decide whether they wish to invest in the short or long term. Is not the Government's only contribution to provide a stable economy with low inflation?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is the responsibility and duty of investors and businesses to take a long-term view and they increasingly do so. It is the Government's job to provide a stable framework and reduce inflation. The Labour party's policies would re-ignite inflation and exacerbate short-term pressures.

Mr. Salmond: Would the Secretary of State consider short-termism among investors as a suitable excuse for the rocky position of sterling on the foreign exchange markets? Does he accept that the position of sterling is a verdict on industrial performance and, if so, is the verdict guilty or not guilty?

Mr. Lilley: That is another example of someone criticising short-termism by taking the shortest possible

short-term view. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that when he has created an independent Scottish state it will have a separate currency, or would he go for the ecu?

Mr. Donald Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend take no lectures from the Labour party on short-termism, as its short-term policies will last only as long as the election and change for every by-election——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this about export credit guarantees?

Mr. Thompson: —especially in this field?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the great problems that industry would face under a Labour Government would be knowing how long their policies would last before being reversed, not least on Europe. The Labour party seems to reverse its policies on that issue twice every decade.

Export Credit Guarantees

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about export credit guarantees to eastern Europe and the USSR.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Export Credits Guarantee Department short-term export credit cover is available, subject to certain conditions, for the USSR and all the countries in eastern Europe. The availability of medium-term cover varies from country to country.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister will be aware of Oldham Batteries in my constituency, which has an excellent reputation for making mining batteries. He will also be aware that the British market for such products is steadily declining and there is considerable scope for the company to sell batteries to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Is he aware that that firm and many other people feel that the Governments of other countries in Europe give more assistance to manufacturers to sell to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union than do the British Government? Will the Minister give an assurance that the jobs of my constituents will be helped by the Government's provision of credit?

Mr. Sainsbury: The Export Credits Guarantee Department has assisted an enormous volume of exports and will continue to do so. I am sure that the factory in the hon. Gentleman's constituency would like to be paid for its exports. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is aware that the economy of the Soviet Union is in a confused state and that some of the other countries have heavy debt burdens. Those matters will have to be taken into account when we consider whether to allow credit for exports to those countries.

Mr. Knapman: After the long bout of socialism there is bound to be economic instability in Russia and perhaps the way forward would be for those who do not trust the rouble to use barter deals. Will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the application of a company in my constituency which requires a small amount of insurance cover that could lead to tens of millions of pounds' worth of business?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend takes a close interest in the prosperity of companies in his constituency and has written to me about that case. I am happy to say that my officials will be meeting representatives from the company tomorrow to see what ECGD can do to help in the present confused economic position in the Soviet Union.

Ms. Quin: Will the Minister confirm that we have stopped medium-term cover for the Soviet Union longer than any other OECD country? Does the Department of Trade and Industry accept that, while there may be no short-term commercial interest in giving export credit cover, there is a case for doing so in the national and long-term commercial interest? Such a case should be made out. What is the Treasury's attitude to providing cover? Is it simply intent on killing off ECGD altogether?

Mr. Sainsbury: All the major export credit agencies are reviewing cover for the Soviet Union.

Exports

3. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of the United Kingdom's exports in 1990-91 to *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Japan.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the year to September 1991, the value of United Kingdom visible exports to the United States of America was almost double the level of a decade earlier, while exports to Japan had nearly quadrupled.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend gives impressive figures which underline the importance of a successful outcome to the GATT talks. Will he give the House more information on the Priority Japan campaign which is being run with British industry? I understand that it has already achieved positive results and it shows just what British industry can do.

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the importance of a successful outcome to the Uruguay round of GATT. As a result of the Priority Japan campaign, which my Department launched with British industry, British exports to Japan have risen by no less than 80 per cent. since 1988.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that we should all congratulate those British companies that have contributed to the success in export achievements? Does he further agree that the levels achieved have been assisted by investment in the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, by American and Japanese companies? Will he continue to encourage further investment, which will lead automatically to further increases in exports?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is right to recognise the importance of inward investment in contributing to export success. For example, our exports of television sets substantially exceed imports. Investment in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the United Kingdom, is important. That is why I am so concerned about the hostile attitude to inward investment taken by the Trades Union Congress and the failure of the Opposition to repudiate the TUC view.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm that exports have increased by 70 per cent. over the past 10 years and that this country now exports more per head

than even the Japanese? Over the past three months Bristol Babcock in my constituency has received export orders of £10 million.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right. The success of our manufactured exports gives the lie to the Opposition's portrayal of manufacturing. British exporters have been extremely successful and that is because the Government have provided them with the right framework for success.

Airlines (Purchasing Decisions)

4. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet representatives of British airlines to discuss the consequences for the British aircraft engineering industry of their recent decisions on purchasing aircraft and engines.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): No, Sir.

Mr. Flannery: Has not the Minister discussed with the chairman of British Airways the very large order for American planes with American engines? Does not he understand the impact that that will have on British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce? It would have been possible for British Aerospace to manufacture the wings and for Rolls-Royce to manufacture the engines. British manufacturing is taking a blow and all that the Minister can do is to give a monosyllabic, negative answer without any explanation.

Mr. Leigh: Naturally, I understand Rolls-Royce's disappointment, but we must put the matter in perspective. Rolls-Royce's order book stands at a record £7 billion. Some two thirds of the turnover of the British aerospace industry is exported. It would be against our interests to adopt a more protectionist and interventionist policy in aerospace, because it could lead to other countries adopting the same approach. That would be against the interests of our industry.

Mr. Hayward: Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is disappointment on both sides of the Chamber at the recent decision by British Airways? Although we recognise that it was a business decision, there are substantial implications, particularly for Rolls-Royce. I reiterate what the Minister said: the aerospace industry in general is exporting more than ever before in the face of substantial competition from abroad.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is right. Rolls-Royce is having success with its excellent new Trent engines and has succeeded in getting an order for the Airbus A330. We wish the company every success for the future. My hon. Friend is right to pinpoint the fact that it would be against the interests of British Airways and Rolls-Royce for politicians to second-guess the commercial decision making of private companies.

Mr. Hoyle: Does not the Minister realise that nobody is asking the Government to second-guess? He is merely being asked why he did not discuss the matter with Lord King. Further, does he realise that Rolls-Royce now has very little chance of being specified as the lead engine on the 777? The fact that the alternative was a stretch version of the A330 would have meant, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said, that both the wings and the aero engines would have been manufactured in Britain. That would have been good for Britain, for employment, for British Airways, for British Aerospace and for Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Leigh: There was a time when Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry not only discussed these matters with the industries but directed them. I remind the Opposition that in those days, when British Airways was still in state ownership, it made a loss of £140 million before tax. By contrast, in 1990 the airline posted a profit of £130 million. The question is really an attack on the privatisation of British Airways, which is a successful company operating in a highly competitive marketplace. Nothing would be more disastrous for the future of British Airways than for it to be summoned to my right hon. Friend's office and told how to run its affairs. We used to do things that way and British Airways made a thumping loss as a result.

Inflation

5. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from business men about the importance of controlling inflation.

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): Many business men have stressed the importance of controlling inflation. I am sure that the House will welcome the fact that it is down to 3·7 per cent. and below the EC average, as that provides the sort of background against which businesses can expand and export abroad.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend agree that, at 3·7 per cent., the rate of inflation is half the lowest level that it was under the last Labour Government? Does he accept that small business organisations are extraordinarily worried by the interview given by the Leader of the Opposition to the *Evening Standard*? When tackled on how the Labour party would deal with inflation, the right hon. Gentleman said, "To cut a story short, we do not know."

Mr. Redwood: That was a rare moment of honesty and brevity from the Leader of the Opposition. We all welcome his precision in noting the fact that the Opposition do not have a proper policy. How right my hon. Friend is to point out that our rate of inflation is less than half the best rate ever achieved by the 1974-79 Labour and Labour-Liberal Administration. We do not intend to repeat their experience and we have the policies to make sure that we do not.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the importance of trying to reduce inflation, does the Minister agree that increasing unemployment—8,000 more jobless people in the city of Liverpool alone since January this year—and the effect on the telecommunications industry of the recent GEC announcements mean that he should look especially at ECGD funding? I commend to him early-day motion 209, tabled by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), which calls on the Government to take a more realistic view of the help that they can give to telecommunications if those important jobs are to be safeguarded.

Mr. Redwood: That information is vital to the creation of new jobs. A former Labour Prime Minister got that far in his thinking in the 1970s when he pointed out that one could not have high inflation and lots of employment and that high inflation would reduce rather than increase the number of jobs.

The best way to create jobs in the telecommunications industry is through liberalisation, our duopoly review, opening up the market, allowing the new products to come through and allowing customers to make their decisions in the marketplace. I promise the hon. Gentleman that jobs will follow from those decisions.

Trade and Tariff Barriers

6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress in lowering trade and tariff barriers; and what progress is being made in the GATT negotiations.

Mr. Lilley: We believe that a successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round before the end of the year is vital for Britain, essential for the world economy and still within our grasp.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his interesting reply. Could not the European Community learn something from north America, where a tariff-free trade area, consisting of Canada and the United States and soon to be joined by Mexico, has been created? That has been achieved without the need for massive bureaucracy or supranational government or any loss of sovereignty. Does my right hon. Friend agree that free markets need only a system of laws and not all that bureaucracy?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a telling case. It is indeed a fact that the greatest prize in Europe is the completion of the single market. The Government are single-minded about the single market. It is a British idea, introduced by a British Commissioner and it will be brought to a conclusion under a British presidency. We believe that that is of supreme importance to Europe and we want to extend the benefits wider through agreements with the European Free Trade Association.

Mr. James Lamond: Although both the successful conclusion of the GATT negotiations and the temporary extension of the multi-fibre arrangement are welcome, can the Secretary of State assure us that there will be some mechanism to control the expansion of imports of textiles and footwear into this country after the MFA finishes? Will he bear in mind the fact that many eastern European countries are looking to this country as a possible dumping ground and they produce their goods with wages of about 20p an hour?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman, who follows these matters closely, will know that an outline agreement affecting textiles is on the table which, I hope, given the completion of the whole GATT round, will come into force. That will mean that the gradual integration of textiles into the usual GATT arrangements over 10 years will be accompanied and, in most cases, preceded by a strengthening of the rules and discipline of GATT which, among other things, apply to surges of imports, dumping and so on. I hope that that is a reassurance. It has been taken as a reassurance by the British textile industry.

Mr. Grylls: Will my right hon. Friend use his considerable influence to ensure that the problems outstanding on the GATT negotiations are discussed at the Maastricht summit? Many people rightly think that they are far more important than many of the items currently on the agenda which are causing problems. Let us get down to tackling practical matters such as getting those trade negotiations tied up. I hope that my right hon. Friend uses his influence.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the great importance that we attach to a successful GATT round. There is nothing more important for the world economy. At the G7 Heads of Government meeting, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister obtained the personal commitment of the round before the end of the year and it was partly as a result of that that the valuable meeting took place between President Bush and Mr. Lubbers, on behalf of the Community, which I hope has moved matters towards a conclusion. Whether there will be enough time at the Maastricht summit to discuss those matters as well remains to be seen.

Mr. Ron Brown: If the Secretary of State believes that he can get rid of tariffs, why does he support the Common Market, now known as the European Community—that big business club which is essentially a conspiracy against the working class and is certainly not wholeheartedly supported on this side of the House? Will he explain his philosophy? If he really accepts that, somehow or other, the Common Market is a panacea and if the British people have no say about whether we should continue our membership of that club, which does not have the interests of the common people at heart, how can it be justified?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman goes on about conspiracies against the working class, but I gather that in his constituency the working class conspired against him.

We have abolished tariffs within the single market and the level of tariffs outside the Community is on average, 4 or 5 per cent.—much lower than it used to be. We are determined to resist calls for a fortress Europe, which would be damaging to world trade. One reason why we are determined not to have a Labour Government is that they might tip the balance in the Community towards a fortress Europe and against the forces of free trade which we have successfully orchestrated so far.

Industry (Support)

7. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry to discuss Government support for industry.

Mr. Lilley: I regularly meet representatives of the CBI to discuss all matters affecting industry. This month I was the first Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to be invited to address its conference since it began 15 years ago.

Mr. MacKay: When my right hon. Friend last met the CBI, did he have an opportunity to discuss its recent report on manufacturing industry in which it said that the Government should have no role in backing winners, which is precisely the Opposition's policy?

Mr. Lilley: I discussed it with the CBI and congratulated the CBI on it. It was an excellent report. It endorsed British industry's achievements under the policies that we have been pursuing for the past 12 years, urged us to continue and build upon them in future and condemned utterly the sort of policies still advocated by the Labour party, which is stuck in a mind-set of the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The CBI, in its cogently argued annual report, argues for a more involved, better-funded Department of Trade and Industry doing more to help British industry. The Secretary of State, with the Chancellor, argues for a less well-funded, less involved Department of Trade and Industry. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why the CBI is wrong and he is right?

Mr. Lilley: I can tell the House why the hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong. First, it was not an annual report but a one-off; secondly, it did not call for more funding——

Mr. Carlile: It did.

Mr. Lilley: It did not. Thirdly, it specifically ruled out more funding and subsidies and a return to the policies pursued by the last Labour Government, with the support of the Liberal party. The CBI rejected all that. It said that it did not want the Government to channel funds in the direction of strategically selected industries.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend recall the CBI's estimate that a 1 per cent. rise in inflation costs industry some £5 billion? Does not that show that the Government could best serve the CBI by running the economy in such a way that inflation is kept down and does not reach the levels that it reached under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Lilley: That is absolutely right. That is why the CBI has warned against policies—advocated by Labour—that would re-ignite inflation. Premature cuts in interest rates, £35 billion of extra public spending, and increased public borrowing and taxation would all set fire to inflation. To put Labour in charge would be like trying to douse a fire with kerosene.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: If the Government's record is so good, why has the CBI just reported that investment in manufacturing has fallen by 18·8 per cent. in the past year, and that it will fall by 4·4 per cent. next year? Is not the estimate of a fall of 22·2 per cent. in two years a damning verdict on the Government?

Mr. Lilley: On the contrary, the CBI takes a long-term view—unlike Opposition Members, who rarely take a view longer than 12 months—and it commends the fact that manufacturing investment is now a third up on the level of 10 years ago. It says that recent years have seen a transformation in Britain's manufacturing base, and it condemns those who do not recognise it and continue to run down the achievements of British industry. That, I think, is a pretty clear coded reference to Opposition Members.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Department of Trade and Industry has an important role to play in creating the right climate for manufacturing industry? I know that a question has already been asked about export credit guarantees, but does not my right hon. Friend feel that the Government could be more pragmatic, constructive and helpful in assisting manufacturing industry to gain the many orders for capital equipment in the Soviet Union and eastern European countries that cannot proceed because of the Department's failure to grant export credit cover?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to refer to the Government's role in setting the right climate and environment and providing the right services for industry.

My hon. Friend asked about the Export Credits Guarantee Department. We have paid out eight times as much in funds to industry as we have taken in premiums since 1984. Over that period there has been only a 10 per cent. increase in the average premium—some premiums have risen while others have fallen. Naturally, companies trading in the more risky markets, for which premiums have been increased somewhat to reflect the risks, are less than enthusiastic. Overall, however, I think that the comparatively small increase in premiums demonstrates a pragmatic response, given the huge losses incurred over past years.

Motor Industry

8. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet representatives of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders to discuss the effects of the recession on the motor industry.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders on 11 November to discuss various motor industry issues. While no further meeting is planned for the immediate future, the Department maintains regular contact with the SMMT at all levels.

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister aware that car sales have fallen every month for the past two years and that, as a consequence, domestic production fell by 27 per cent. last month alone? Will he offer any hope for the future of the industry and its employees when he next meets the SMMT?

Mr. Leigh: What the hon. Gentleman fails to mention is that the industry has shown enormous flexibility in increasing exports by a massive 78 per cent. in the first nine months of this year. Contrary to what he said, that has enabled the industry to maintain production at much the same levels as those of 1990.

Mr. Roger King: My hon. Friend has just referred to the car industry's exports during the past few years, and especially this year, which reflect the quality of the product and the improvements in manufacturing technology. Does he agree that to stimulate demand within the United Kingdom home market, where problems exist on the retail side, the industry is entitled to expect some special attention from the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the next Budget, which could include a reduction in or the total elimination of the appalling 10 per cent. special car tax?

Mr. Leigh: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will note with great interest my hon. Friend's comments. If he does not do so, I shall draw them to his attention.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the Minister aware of the very serious position that faces the Jaguar car company in my constituency? Is he aware that the effect of the special car tax and of the vicious recession in the United Kingdom and the USA has led to the sacking of more than one third of Jaguar car workers this year? Does he realise that we need to deal urgently with the special car tax and to review the punitive arrangements affecting company cars that have so badly hit the Jaguar car company in my constituency?

Mr. Leigh: The luxury car companies are restructuring, especially Rolls-Royce and Jaguar. We wish them success in the future. The hon. Gentleman will know that I cannot comment on what he said about taxation. I shall ensure, however, that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is made aware of his comments.

Mr. Butcher: May I press my hon. Friend a little further on the question of the special car tax, given the Government's excellent record in getting rid of idiosyncratic taxes, of which this is one? Will my hon. Friend confirm that were he to make representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, there is no constitutional impediment to the Chancellor abolishing taxes before Budget day?

Mr. Leigh: I shall draw those remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Henderson: On a recent visit to Preston, the managing director of Leyland DAF told me that sales of trucks and buses—which I am sure the Minister agrees form an important part of the industry—in 1991 are at their lowest level since the 1930s. Does the hon. Gentleman have the grace to accept that that is clear evidence of the damage that has been done to our economy by a Government who have no industrial policy? Can he declare that the Government intend to produce an industrial policy? Furthermore, what support can he give to the motor industry?

Mr. Leigh: I am sure that the House would be interested to know what the Labour party's industrial policy is for the motor industry. British Leyland absorbed a massive £2·9 billion in state subsidies while it was nationalised. What is the Labour party's policy? All we have, in the Opposition's current phrase of the month, is a kneejerk reaction. They have no policy for the future of the motor industry. We have created a flexible motor industry that increased its exports by 78 per cent. in the first nine months of this year. We have every reason to suppose that as soon as there is a reverse in the current downturn in demand, we shall be able to move to even greater success in the home market.

Inward Investment

9. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from business men about the need for the United Kingdom to remain a receptive and attractive base for inward investment.

Mr. Redwood: The CBI has recently pointed out how important inward investment is to this country, and pointed to the success of this Government in attracting it —a success not assisted by some in the Labour movement, who call it "alien". I hope that Opposition Members will dissociate themselves from that comment, because Japanese and American investment is more than welcome here.

Mr. Squire: Does my hon. Friend agree that a co-ordinated tax policy across the Community—now advocated by the Opposition—would severely damage inward investment, much of which is attracted here by our lower corporation tax and income tax rates? The Labour party advocates that in addition to its well-known policies of intervention, control and regulation.

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my hon. Friend. The tax on businesses is much lighter here than in France, and it is also lower than in Germany. That is a powerful argument for companies that are thinking of locating within the Community to come to Britain. Were we ever to have the misfortune of a Labour Government, which is unlikely in the immediate future, the British public might welcome common taxation systems. Average taxation rates would then be lower than Labour rates, but higher than Conservative rates. We intend to keep a Conservative Government for that and other reasons.

Mr. Ted Garrett: The Minister made great play of being single-minded. Does he accept that that single-minded attitude about which he is boasting is the curse of British manufacturing industry? How can one expect inward investment when no assistance is given to our existing industries? I am referring to the machine tool industry, which is a key industry now suffering and struggling to keep seventh place in the world. There were further redundancies last week. I warn Ministers that if the machine tool industry goes under, it will act as a deterrent to inward investment because it will show that the Government are not committed to the principle of assistance.

Mr. Redwood: The Government have a clear industrial policy which has been set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Low taxation is vital to that policy, as is the assistance given in some assisted areas by my hon. Friend the Minister responible for regional selective assistance. Also vital is the support that we give to exports and trade abroad when British companies are involved. The hon. Gentleman should do his homework on those points. We have a single-minded policy for British industrial success, but the Opposition have a feeble-minded policy which would achieve nothing for British industry.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituency is extremely attractive geographically for countries making inward investment in Britain and that it has prospered from such inward investment? Does my hon. Friend agree that more than ever it is important that an agreement is reached at Maastricht in which Britain takes a whole-hearted role in the European Community, because otherwise it will cease to be so attractive for inward investment?

Mr. Redwood: We all hope that there will be a good agreement at Maastricht. We want an agreement that promotes business and does not impose burdens or barriers upon the business community. That is what the Government are fighting for, among other things, in those important discussions. The success of our policy is evident

in Crawley, which is well served by my hon. Friend. It is also evident in the overall figures, which show that we have attracted almost 40 per cent. of the total American and Japanese investment into the European Community. Those are astonishingly good figures which show the attraction of Britain as a location for investment.

Regional Policy

10. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet representatives of the European Commission to discuss regional policy.

Mr. Leigh: I met other European Ministers responsible for regional policy and Mr. Bruce Millan, the responsible member of the Commission, at The Hague on 18 and 19 November.

Mr. Patchett: Will the Minister act immediately to unblock the RECHAR money for Britain's coalfield areas such as South Yorkshire? Does he realise that France and Germany are already benefiting from the scheme, but that we are denied it because of the Government's obstinacy?

Mr. Leigh: The person who needs to unblock the money is not a member of the Government but Commissioner Millan. He is blocking the money. I remind the House that we pay £1,800 million into structural funds and receive only £900 million back. We make clear provision for RECHAR in public spending. We want our money and we want it now. We want to stop Opposition Members conniving with the Commission to withhold our money.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Contrary to what the Labour party is saying, I have a letter from Commissioner Millan dated 8 November that makes his position clear. He said that it is not about additionality, but about the way that the Government are targeting the money. Is not it time that he stopped playing party politics and gave us our money for our constituents?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is right. He speaks as a Conservative representing a coal mining area and he truly speaks up for the industry. France, Spain and Italy have much the same system of additionality as we have. Why is not Commissioner Millan withholding their money? Why is he withholding our money when, although the structural funds are doubling, we are likely to receive less? The legal position is clear. He should stop shilly-shallying around and mucking about and ensure that that £100 million of our money is released to our coal mining areas.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Minister confirm—yes or no—that it is not only the local authorities that are demanding that the money be unblocked, but the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman knows that the constitutional position is clear. Ministers cannot disagree with each other and, therefore, they never do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What on earth will the Government do about the irresponsible and scandalous actions of Commissioner Millan who is withholding money, to which we are legally entitled, on the basis of a bogus bureaucratic point? Is not it time that the Government, who pay in a massive amount of money—equivalent to a net contribution of £3 a week per family—simply deducted £109 million from the vast amount that they send to Brussels every month?

Mr. Leigh: I cannot promise to do that immediately. I agree that it is an absurd position for Commissioner Millan to take. Why have not the Opposition considered the serious point that I have made—that structural funds are doubling, yet we shall receive less? Our rules on additionality have not changed. Opposition Members are cutting off their noses to spite their own faces by encouraging Mr. Millan to withhold our money. We want it, and we want it now. The legal position is clear, so can we please stop this nonsense? I tell Opposition Members that we shall not give way; we shall retain control over public spending. We will not tolerate a situation in which the Government are treated like a county council and a county council treated like the Government.

Guyana

11. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions Ministers in his Department have had with the Government of Guyana concerning trade since 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), when Minister for Trade, met President Hoyte and Mr. Winston Murray, the then Guyanese Minister for Trade and Tourism, in 1987. He met Mr. Murray again in 1988.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Minister a question of which I have given the Department of Trade and Industry notice? Is it true that a former DTI Minister, who happens to be the current treasurer of the Conservative party—the noble Lord Beaverbrook—in five months made a profit of £50 million by purchasing and then selling a huge tract of the fragile Guyana rain forest? How will that square at the environment conference at Rio de Janeiro as an example of what the British do to try to save the rain forest?

Mr. Sainsbury: The financial details of the transaction to which the hon. Member referred, and which bear no resemblance to those that he described, took place two years after my noble Friend left the Government. We all know of the hon. Gentleman's concern for environmental protection and for tropical and rain forests, but the article in *The Guardian*—I stress, *The Guardian*—drew attention to the fact that the proposal was to take only 20 cu m of wood per hectare, which is only eight trees, every 20 years. That was the first time that there had been a programme for sustainable forestry management in Guyana.

Mr. Dickens: When my hon. Friend next meets Ministers from Guyana and other countries, will he explain that they should buy British goods because they are best? He could remind them that since 1981, the volume of manufactured exports from the United Kingdom has outstripped that of France, Germany, Japan and the United States of America. That is why we are a great nation and why my hon. Friend should attack the Opposition, who constantly talk it down. We are not a small nation, but a great nation.

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the true and forceful points that my hon. Friend made were heard by Opposition Members and that they will take note of the success of

British industry. I assure my hon. Friend that when I meet Guyanese Ministers—or, indeed, Ministers from any country—I take every opportunity to promote British exports.

Mrs. Fyfe: Surely the Minister feels some embarrassment about the fact that a former Minister at his Department bought a Guyanese asset for £9·7 million and sold it a few months later for £62 million worth of shares? How are Guyanese people expected to buy goods from Britain or anywhere else when they are so impoverished? How will they repay their debt when the poorest of the poor are cheated in such a way? Is not it frustrating for aid agencies across the globe to have their efforts swept aside by deals such as this, which cheat the people of Guyana?

Mr. Sainsbury: I have already pointed out that the financial details of the transaction were, as I understand them, nothing like those suggested by the hon. Lady or her hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The forest involved in the transaction had been losing substantial sums of money under Guyanese Government management. As a result of the transaction not only will there be substantial investment and sustainable forestry, but 450 jobs that would otherwise have been lost will be preserved.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory answer, I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Japanese Investment

12. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from business men about the impact of the Trades Union Congress's attitude to Japanese inward investment into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: I recently met the Japanese Keidanren when they visited this country, and I reassured them that the Government continue to welcome and support Japanese investment in this country.

Mr. Powell: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the level of Japanese investment in this country runs into billions of pounds and that it underpins tens of thousands of jobs directly and a great many more indirectly? Is not my right hon. Friend absolutely astonished at the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to condemn the absurd criticisms made of that investment by the Trades Union Congress?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Japanese investment in this country has been enormously valuable to us and it is vital that it should continue. The resolution of the Trades Union Congress, which was passed by an overwhelming majority, was damaging to that prospect. However, most scandalous of all is the failure of the Opposition's spokesmen on industry and on employment, when given the opportunity, to dissociate themselves from it. Even now they talk among themselves to hide their embarrassment. I should happily give way —if it were in my power to do so—to give them the opportunity to dissociate themselves from that appalling motion.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State recall that although he gave an account of meetings with the Japanese, the question asked specifically what representations he had received from business men? Will he reply to the question?

Mr. Lilley: When I was in the north-east, there was particular concern among business men whom I met because the north-east in particular has benefited greatly from Japanese investment and it does not want investors to be frightened off. Many British companies, including the one that I visited yesterday, sell very satisfactorily to Japanese companies in this country and that provides a vast market for supplier companies. They are concerned, which makes it all the more alarming that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen continue to sit on their backsides and endorse the TUC's policy.

EC Directives

13. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many directives under the single market programme have been implemented by the United Kingdom; and what percentage have been implemented by the other EC members.

Mr. Redwood: As a result of the United Kingdom initiative, the Internal Market Council of the European Community now receives regular updates on the implementation of single market measures. The last meeting was given the figures up to 15 October 1991. The United Kingdom had implemented 111 of the 137 measures required—81 per cent.—and we have implemented more since then. That confirms that the United Kingdom is at the forefront in implementing single market measures. Comparable percentage figures for other member states show that Denmark has implemented 91 per cent., France 86 per cent., Portugal 79 per cent., Spain, Greece and Germany 77 per cent. each, the Netherlands and Belgium 72 per cent., Luxembourg 69 per cent., Ireland 64 per cent. and, I am afraid to say, Italy 54 per cent.

Mr. Bowis: Do not those excellent figures show that this party and this country are sincere and wholehearted in their activities within the European Community? Do not they also draw attention to the willingness of some countries and some parties to sign up to measures that they have no intention of implementing? For that reason, is not one of the most important elements of the draft treaty now under discussion the proposal to tighten penalties for nations within the Community that fail to meet their obligations?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Government believe in serious negotiation to get the details right before signing the directives. Sometimes that is difficult because we will implement them and we want them to be fairly applied across the Community. The Commission is with us on that and it was especially firm with Italy at the most recent informal Internal Market Council about its poor state of implementation. The Italian Minister was unable to promise more than having implemented one out of two by the end of the year. Many of the other member states agreed with the Commission that more should be done to ensure that that implementation goes ahead.

Our business men expect nothing less. They expect good law that makes sense for business and they expect it to be applied uniformly across the Community, both by

implementation and by proper enforcement. My hon. Friend may like to know that the Government are now studying the Frankovich judgment, which may also have some bearing on speed of implementation in the Community.

Mr. Enright: Is not the social charter regarded on the continent by both right and left as an essential complement to a single trading area? British Ministers are looked on as grubby messengers with grubby messages.

Mr. Redwood: That is quite untrue. Many people on the continent agree with us that business must not be overburdened and that it should be allowed to make choices about how best to involve employees in the process of the business. We want our system, just as surely as France and Germany want to be free to enjoy their systems. They have evolved over time; one is not right and one is not wrong. They are good for our countries.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the figures and the fact that French farmers regularly burn lorry loads of English lamb and Italian grapes with complete impunity and that it is not possible for an English lorry firm to go to Germany and to load up with goods to bring back to the United Kingdom, should not the European Community try to walk before it tries to run?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend has spoken for me. We want to see full progress with the single market as the priority programme for the European Community. As the man who has to do most of the negotiating on single market measures, I know that there is still a long way to go. I pledge to the House that there will be no lack of effort by the Government to make a success of that programme.

Regional Policy

14. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet representatives of the European Commission to discuss regional policy and the implications for the manufacturing sector of industry.

Mr. Leigh: I met other European Ministers responsible for regional policy and Mr. Bruce Millan, the responsible member of the Commission, at The Hague on 18 and 19 November. Several of the issues discussed have implications for the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Pike: Is the Minister alarmed that reports by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show that United Kingdom investment per person in the manufacturing sector is the lowest, apart from that of Greece, in the European Community? Is he concerned about that? Does he understand that our manufacturing regions, such as the north-west, believe that the Government are not interested in the regions or in manufacturing industry?

Mr. Leigh: That is absolute nonsense. If it were true, why am I, as responsible Minister, spending £567 million of taxpayers' money over the current public expenditure survey round on regional policy?

Burdens on Business

15. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from industrialists about the importance of reducing Government burdens on business.

Mr. Redwood: The Government get frequent representations about the need to reduce burdens or to keep them light. They also get many representations against proposals that the Labour party and, sometimes, the Commission sponsor which would burden business.

Mr. Martin: Will my hon. Friend continue not only to listen to the representations, but to act on them in every way possible? Will he remind any business man foolish enough to think that a Labour Government would be better for business of the myriad proposals which would prove the truth to be quite the opposite, which would make life far more difficult and which would especially energise union militancy which is at the bottom of some of the proposals?

Mr. Redwood: I can promise that the Government will do no less. We want to keep the burdens down. Some of the burdens identified recently by business which worry it most are proposals such as the minimum wage and some elements of the social charter which would greatly increase costs and could resurrect union militancy after our years of recent success in which we have created far more harmony and success. We have a very good strike record.

Link Projects

16. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the budgeted figure has been allocated to link projects in the current financial year.

Mr. Leigh: The link scheme is organised on a five-yearly basis with a total Government budget of £210 million. To date, 30 programme areas of research have been approved committing the Government to expenditure of £183 million or 87 per cent. of the total.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that the system has been a total failure, which was one of the reasons why the link steering group used consultants to study the scheme? They reported back at the end of January 1991 and commented that one of the reasons for the massive underspending was the fact that one had to have three companies before one could apply. How can the Minister assess how much money will be needed when there has been a shortfall, as there was last year?

Mr. Leigh: If that programme has been such a failure, why do we now have 30 programmes targeting support for identifiable industrial priority areas, and why are there almost 200 collaborative research programmes? If it is such a failure, why have we committed £183 million? That shows that the Government are totally committed to encouraging academia and industry to work together in that excellent and successful programme.

Manufacturing Output

17. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received about manufacturing output.

Mr. Lilley: The most valuable of the representations that I have had on manufacturing industry is the excellent report from the manufacturing advisory group of the CBI, which hails the resurgence in manufacturing that began in the 1980s and calls on us to continue and to build on the policies that brought that about.

Mr. Strang: Given that British manufacturing output for the previous quarter was 5 per cent. down on a year ago, and is only 6 per cent. higher that it was in 1979—while that in west Germany has risen by 26 per cent., that in the United States by 32 per cent. and that in Japan by 36 per cent.—is not it clear that Government policies on manufacturing industry have been little short of disastrous? When will the Secretary of State increase investment in manufacturing industry and halt the haemorrhage of jobs?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman's primary point was the customary short-term Labour party view—a 12-month view. He singularly ignores the performance of manufacturing under the Labour Government, when output fell. I reiterate that, as the CBI report says, manufacturing output is now up by 25 per cent. on that of 10 years ago, investment up by one third, productivity up by more than one half and manufactured exports up by almost three quarters. Our share of trade in world manufactures has outstripped that of Germany, France, America and Japan.

Sunday Trading (Legislation)

3.30 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the steps that he intends to take to prevent the wholesale breach of the Sunday trading laws by Tesco, Asda and Safeway stores.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Parliament has placed on local authorities the primary responsibility for enforcing the provisions of the Shops Act 1950. Two ways are open to them: they can prosecute traders or they can ask the civil courts for injunctions ordering traders not to break the law laid down in those provisions.

Local authorities and others have asked me to take action in the civil courts because of the present uncertain state of Community law, which has recently been acknowledged by English courts, including the House of Lords. They say that this uncertainty impedes the ability of local authorities to get injunctions from the courts, and that to go to court puts too much of their money at risk.

The Community law point is this: defendant traders have been arguing in English courts that the provisions of the Shops Act are not compatible with our obligations under the treaty of Rome. They say that the provisions breach article 30—the free trade article—and are no longer part of the law of England. It follows, say the traders, that injunctions forbidding them to breach the provisions should not be granted. Both the House of Lords and a lower court have referred the relevant questions of Community law to the European Court.

Meanwhile, the English courts have made one thing clear—that any authority applying for an interim injunction will have to undertake to pay the trader's resulting losses if it loses the case in the end.

It remains the responsibility of local authorities to decide their own course of action.

For my part, any decision that I now take is my sole responsibility as Attorney-General, and not a decision of the Government. On the other hand, matters of political policy are not for me but for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. If I were now to bring civil proceedings, I should have to bring a very large number of actions, and those would be no less affected by the Community law point. I believe that in those circumstances I, too, would have to give undertakings as to damages.

The law is not suspended. Local authorities can continue to apply for injunctions. Moreover, any trader who trades on Sunday, relying only on the present uncertainty, remains liable to criminal proceedings. In the light of those and all other relevant considerations, I have decided not to intervene. Naturally, I will keep developments under review.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is not the law perfectly clear and enforceable as far as British courts are concerned? [HON. MEMBERS: "English".] Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that the individuals concerned are directors of very large companies, who seek to enrich themselves at the expense of smaller competitors which wish to keep Sunday special for their staff, their families and the general public? Are not those people trying to bully the Government into abandoning the whole of the Sunday trading laws? I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to use his powers under the criminal law to take those people to the courts—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has every right to speak.

Mr. Stanbrook: —to take those people to the courts and seek to get them bound over to obey the law until Christmas at least, on pain of imprisonment, which they richly deserve. When it comes to law breaking, what is the difference between a rich bully and a petty thief?

The Attorney-General: I—and the whole House—have known my hon. Friend long enough to realise, sympathise with and admire his concern for matters affecting the law. I wish to make it perfectly clear that the enforcement of the law in this regard is a matter for me as Attorney-General alone. It is not a matter, as my hon. Friend uncharacteristically suggested, for the Government.

My hon. Friend said that the law is perfectly clear as far as British courts are concerned. I have drawn the attention of the House to the fact that English courts have indicated some uncertainty as to the content of Community law. Article 30 creates rights in English law in respect of those injured by its infringement which are directly enforceable in English courts. That is why it is a relevant factor.

This issue—which is not an easy one—has absolutely nothing to do with people being bullied and absolutely nothing to do with people being rich or poor. It has to do with a law passed by Parliament, which places the principal and primary responsibility on local authorities. I have considered anxiously whether I should take action but, for the reasons to which I have referred, I have decided that it is not appropriate for me to do so.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Does the Attorney-General agree that an authority charged with the enforcement of the law, as he is, has a discretion whether to proceed in a particular case but cannot lawfully adopt a general policy of not enforcing the law at all? Is that not the effect of the Court of Appeal decision in ex parte Blackburn, and is not the adoption of such a policy the assertion of the suspending power denied to James II?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman quite rightly says that it is not for me to adopt a policy that binds me for the future. That is why I concluded my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington with the words, "Naturally, I will keep developments under review."

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): What course is now open to the British Government to stop our European friends interfering with the British Government?

The Attorney-General: Equally, I understand the concerns that lie behind my hon. Friend's question. It is, however, the fact that, since 1972, directly enforceable Community law has taken precedence over domestic provisions and forms part of English law. That is the answer to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): But is the Attorney-General seriously suggesting that, in the 600 cases awaiting decision by the European Court, those decisions should be set aside and that the law should remain unenforced until decisions are made—perhaps 18 months from now? When the question is asked, "Who

[Mr. David Alton]

runs the Government?", will not the truthful answer be Sir Basil Feldman and the Shopping Hours Reform Council? Is not the right and learned Gentleman embarrassed by the correspondence between the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Conservative party and B & Q, thanking it for sponsorship provided for the Conservative party conference? Is not the right hon. and learned Gentleman embarrassed? How much financial sponsorship has his party received this year from the big vested interests of the large stores—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not need visual aids.

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) wishes to suggest that the Attorney-General has been influenced in this connection—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."]—by any question of any subscription that may have been made to the Conservative party or any other body, he should stand up and make that assertion openly instead of implying that in a question on this matter. If he does that, I shall answer him in terms that he will understand.

Mr. Alton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am not taking it now.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. As there is great interest in this matter outside the House, I ask hon. Members to deal with it in a responsible manner. I shall take the point of order after the statement.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in this matter he has a very special duty to the House in his office of Attorney-General and that in his statement this afternoon he has discharged that duty admirably? Does he further agree that the issue of policy is not for him, but lies elsewhere and that, as is the case in the Chamber, there is a considerable division of opinion on this matter among the British public?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. There may well be a considerable difference of opinion, but, as he has rightly said, questions of policy—and especially how long these provisions remain on our statute book—are not matters for which I have ministerial responsibility. I have to decide whether to seek to apply for injunctions throughout the country—I could not take single cases alone. The primary responsibility has been placed by Parliament on local authorities. For the reasons that I have given, I think that it is right to leave that primary responsibility where it is. As I have said, local authorities are still able to apply for injunctions and to initiate criminal proceedings.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): How does the Attorney-General seek to answer an ordinary citizen who is summonsed for not paying the poll tax when that person knows that the Government have leaned on the local authorities to pursue such summonses, but when that person also sees the Government rolling over like a poodle and conniving and colluding with the big interests—*[Interruption.]*—and conniving and colluding in a breach of the law?

The Attorney-General: Questions of enforcement of the criminal law depend on whether the law is clear and questions regarding injunctions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah"] Wait a minute. Questions regarding taking injunctions to enforce the criminal law are, again, influenced by the question whether the law is clear or whether it is not. If the hon. Gentleman was listening—I am sure he was—he would have heard my reference to the fact that English courts have indicated that there is uncertainty about Community law. English courts have to enforce Community law. That means that it is a relevant factor in the question whether applications should be made for injunctions. I have given an account to the House of why I have decided not to apply at this stage for an injunction. That is not to say that local authorities cannot continue to apply for injunctions if they are so advised.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that no one who knows him could possibly doubt his personal integrity, but does he not agree that the people who made that announcement are behaving with a flagrant disregard for the law and are adopting an attitude which, frankly, is utterly unacceptable to many Conservative Members?

The Attorney-General: I recognise that it is very unacceptable to my hon. Friend and to many others that people should say that they will trade on Sundays. My job is to decide whether I should intervene to supplant the primary responsibility of local authorities, which Parliament placed upon them as long ago as 1950. For the reasons I have given, I do not believe that it is appropriate for me to take that action.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): One appreciates that one of the difficulties in this situation is that the criminal sanctions that are available to local authorities are unlikely to be effective. Surely the Attorney-General realises that this is the right type of situation for recourse to an injunction, because we are dealing with what appears to be a flagrant conspiracy by a significant number of retail chains to flout the law deliberately on a massive scale. Surely the Attorney-General realises that it is not appropriate just to leave this matter to local authorities; potentially, this is a situation where the right hon. and learned Gentleman should act. His failure to act is likely to send a signal to local authorities that they should do nothing.

On the European law, although there may be colourable issues involved, is it not significant that another European Government are introducing proposals to make Sunday a compulsory rest day? That demonstrates that they do not consider that there is any significance attached to the European law argument.

The Attorney-General: I must repeat that questions of political policy are not for me in this regard. I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says about the criminal sanction that is available to local authorities under the provisions of the Shops Act 1950. A more effective means of enforcing the law is a civil injunction obtained in the civil courts. The question is whether it is for local authorities to exercise their jurisdiction in their areas. It is a matter of speculation, but I think that it is

likely that Parliament, in putting primary responsibility on those local authorities, wanted local circumstances to be taken into account by the enforcing authorities. Whether that is the case or not, local authorities retain that responsibility.

I have told the House that I would have to take a very large number of actions up and down the country and that I would have to give a cross-undertaking as to damages. I took those considerations into account when I came to my decision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is an extension of Question Time. I shall take one more question from each side and then we will move on to the statement from the Home Office Minister.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Following that answer, is it not a factor in the present situation that the fines that can be levied under the Shops Act are not a deterrent to the kind of people that the House has in mind today, whereas they can be extremely punitive to the corner shop, the small do-it-yourself or the small garden centre? They are the very people that the House might well be minded to exempt were new legislation under the Shops Act to be introduced. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the question of the deterrent is a matter for him and is one upon which he could advise the Government to introduce urgent legislation?

The Attorney-General: I agree with my hon. Friend that the maximum fine is low. Therefore, I repeat that the most effective form of law enforcement is that of an injunction. An injunction against a big chain is no more effective than an injunction against a small retailer. If a court gives an order, it is an order that must be obeyed. It will be enforced by the courts, because to break it will be contempt of court. Whether the present Act should remain on the statute book is open to question and debate, but it is not a matter for which I have ministerial responsibility.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Attorney-General confirm that there is little practical possibility of local authorities obtaining injunctions so long as they have to give an undertaking as to damages? The reason why the Attorney-General has been asked to take action is that he is not required to give such an undertaking.

Would the Attorney-General care to tell the House why he was prepared to spend millions of pounds going to court after court, in country after country, in the "Spycatcher" case, when the Government's interests were at stake, but is not prepared to take any action when many interests, which have been evinced by Members of Parliament, are at issue?

Will the Attorney-General also confirm that in the Torfaen case the European Court laid down that article 30 of the treaty of Rome does not apply to national rules such as Sunday trading, where the restrictive effects do not exceed the effects that are intrinsic to such rules? Last April, the European Court upheld the validity of national laws on Sunday trading as they apply to Belgium and France. Therefore, even in European terms, there is little doubt about the law. It is the sort of law that should be settled by domestic legislation rather than by a paragraph in the treaty of Rome.

Is it right that only those who are well endowed and can pay the price can have a European defence, so that we have one law for the rich and another for the poor?

Apart from action by the Attorney-General, could not the Prime Minister take the opportunity of Maastricht to redefine matters such as the Sunday trading laws, which should be entirely a matter of British domestic competence and on which the law should be domestic, clear, understood and enforceable?

The Attorney-General: First, on the question whether I would have to give a cross-undertaking to pay damages if I lost an action, I am advised that, in the circumstances with which I am dealing, I would have to give such an undertaking if I were granted an application for an interim injunction. I accept that advice, although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that the normal rule is that the Crown does not have to give such an undertaking.

The hon. Gentleman's second point was an ingenious reference to the "Spycatcher" case. That action was brought to enforce a life-long duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown. No circumstances in that case put the primary responsibility for enforcing such a duty on local authorities or anyone else, except the Crown and its representatives. The money involved was money well spent, because it resulted in the House of Lords declaring that a life-long duty of confidentiality was owed to the Crown by anyone who had been a member of the security services.

The hon. Gentleman then mentioned the Torfaen case and asked me to confirm that the European Court ruled that the Shops Act 1950 was compatible with article 30. The answer is, not entirely. As the hon. Gentleman knows, an obscure reference made at the end of that judgment has led the House of Lords—to which an appeal in the Stoke-on-Trent *v.* B & Q case has been made and is now pending—to refer the relevant questions of Community law to the European Court under article 177 of the treaty. That will allow the European Court to give a preliminary ruling so that the House of Lords can answer the very question whether the Shops Act is compatible with article 30.

That defence is open to everyone, not only the rich. It is now a matter of public knowledge, and those cases are well reported. Therefore, it is a factor to be taken into account—not necessarily a decisive factor—when considering whether to apply for an injunction. In my case, I would be considering whether to apply for an injunction in a very large number of cases, each time undertaking to pay the damages that would be incurred, if I lose, in the interim between getting that injunction and the ultimate hearing of the case. I have thought it right and in the public interest to take those considerations into account, and, among other factors, they have informed my decision.

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mrs. Angela Rumbold.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order later.

Sunday Trading

3.53 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the reform of the law on Sunday trading in England and Wales.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the correct time to put points of order is at the end of Question Time. It is directly relevant——

Mr. Speaker: It may be, but will the hon. Gentleman please sit down?

Sir Peter Tapsell: This is a statement on a different subject.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time and knows that points of order are taken after statements.

Mrs. Rumbold: As the House knows, I have held an intensive programme of discussions with a wide range of major and conflicting interest groups on possible ways of reforming the law on Sunday trading. Those discussions are continuing, although I must report that at this stage the common ground is limited.

In 1985, Parliament endorsed in principle the conclusion of the Auld committee that total deregulation was the only sensible reform. Although our subsequent measure was approved in another place, it was not passed in this House. Since then, we have made it clear that we will be prepared to consider measures which fall short of total deregulation of the Sunday trading laws, if they would be workable and enforceable, would command popular support and would be accepted by the House. Despite our continued efforts and encouragement, the form of such measures remains widely disputed.

The current uncertainty in relation to Community law to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has referred is also a factor. It would not be sensible to settle policy on the merits of proposals for continuing to restrict trading in types or classes of goods until the compatibility of such measures with Community law has been determined. It is our intention, therefore, to bring forward proposals for reform once the legal position is clear.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): First of all, I thank the Minister. Is she aware that the country will be disappointed in her statement, which says absolutely nothing of significance, except that we shall have to wait for the European Court to rule on shopping hours? When does the Minister expect the European Court to make its ruling on how the Shops Act 1950 interrelates with the European legislation? What does she expect traders who have decided to embark on a campaign of law breaking to do? Does she expect them to continue law breaking after Christmas and indefinitely? What about those companies that are doubtful about what action to take but feel that they should adhere to the law? Does not the right hon. Lady feel that her statement today will drive companies to break the law for commercial reasons? Are not the Government being grossly irresponsible in allowing that?

Is not the right hon. Lady aware that, particularly after her statement, the Government will be seen not to be in control of Sunday trading, and that their policy will be viewed as dictated by certain large businesses? Is she also aware that there is concern in the country that some of those companies—which are determining Government policy when the Government should be doing so—are substantial donors to the Conservative party?

Is the right hon. Lady aware that many people, both in the House and throughout the country, will be exceedingly disappointed that the consultations with various interest groups about changing the 1950 Act, to which she referred, should be taking so long? Why has she been consulting for nearly a year with no results? Why does she not have a joint conference on the matter along the lines proposed by the Labour party? Now that we—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are serious matters which are of grave concern to a great many people outside the House.

Mr. Randall: Now that we know that the Attorney-General has decided not to intervene to enforce the law, does it not mean that the Prime Minister's statement at the Tory party conference, in which he said that he wanted the law adhered to, adds up to nothing short of hypocrisy? How does the hon. Lady distinguish between those who break the law because they do not like the poll tax and those who break the law because they do not like the Shops Act?

Her statement is nothing short of a disaster. The Government are not acting to enforce the law. That has serious implications for our democracy and represents a major failure by the Government in the administration of this country.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made plain to the House the legal position on Sunday trading and the implications of the European Court of Justice ruling on the matter. I was asked whether it would be possible to legislate quickly. The realistic timetable for legislation is not at risk, since clarification of the question is expected in the coming months. I think that that is the response that the hon. Gentleman wanted.

I make it plain that I do not condone the plans of some major retailers to open their shops on Sundays before Christmas. I make it equally plain that I commend those retailers who remain committed to complying with the clear intentions of the law. The hon. Gentleman asked me about my consultations with many interested parties. It has been exceedingly difficult to find any common ground that is acceptable from one extreme to the other.

I would be happy for the hon. Gentleman to come and listen to the many different deliberations, queries and points that have been put to me. It is exceedingly important for the hon. Gentleman to understand, as many of his hon. Friends understand, that the Labour party has no answer to this question. I would be glad to see him come to the Dispatch Box and tell me about Labour's plans.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mrs. Audrey Wise.

Hon. Members: Wrong side.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I know, but there is so much noise that it is difficult to concentrate.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Perhaps I may be permitted to say that the position of the Labour party at this time is that the law should be obeyed. Does the Minister realise that it will not have escaped attention that she picked her words very carefully? She said that she does not "condone". Does she unreservedly condemn this law breaking? Is she aware that employers will be using their power as employers to persuade their workers to break the law?

Will the Minister comment on that? If she says that they will use only volunteers, will she accept that it is a very novel defence of law breaking to say that only volunteers will be used? Will——

Mr. Speaker: No. That is a very long question.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have made perfectly plain my views on opening on Sundays by the major retailers. I do not condone it, and I commend those retailers who have said that they will not open on Sundays. The hon. Lady's question—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the Opposition that this is a very important matter. We should conduct ourselves in a responsible manner.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady asked about shop workers and voluntary workers. This is essentially a matter of the contractual relationship between employee and employer. I understand that the retailers who have said that they will open on Sundays in the run-up to Christmas have given public assurances that none of their employees will be required to work on those days if they do not want to, and that they will pay additional rates to those who work. That is a matter for them.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a sensible statement. Is it not obvious that no hon. Member can do anything but condemn flagrant breaches of the law? It does not lie in the hands of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to bring actions in this matter: it is at the door of the local authorities to bring actions. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the Shops Bill had reached the statute book in 1986, this stupid situation would not have arisen? A number of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members will have to account for that. Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the overwhelming majority of people in this country want us to change the law on Sunday opening, and as soon as possible?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have a debate on this matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must sit down. We cannot have a debate. I ask hon. Members to put questions, and single questions. *[Interruption.]* Mrs. Edwina Currie.

Mrs. Rumbold: If I may answer my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), I agree with the points that he has made, in particular about the attempts that the Government have made to introduce legislation and the responsibility that all hon. Members have for the decisions that they made there. That responsibility, for their view on the Bill, reflects the difficulties of bringing before the House any proposal for legislation that will make any sense, as it is clear that hon. Members accurately reflect the divisions in the outside world.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Which parts of British law——

Hon. Members: Wrong side.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but even I am getting confused. I called two hon. Members from the Opposition side, and I am now balancing that by calling two from the Government side.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Which part of the British law are the Government thinking of changing? Is it Scottish law, which permits people to go shopping on Sunday, or English law, which prevents them from going shopping on Sunday? Is it not wrong that some of my constituents have rights on Sundays to observe as they wish and think proper and most of my constituents have no right to do what they want to do, which is to go shopping?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She puts in a clear way the predicament that faces the House. Whereas one part of the United Kingdom is able to operate its will in the way that she outlines, in England it is not possible yet to do so. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General said, we have to wait until the law is clarified.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is the Minister aware that, in Scotland, many workers are being compelled to work on Sundays, that many are now being compelled to accept new contracts, and that wages have been reduced to a single basic wage? Is she aware that Tesco has written to the Government claiming that it has been forced into breaching the law by the Government's inactivity in bringing to book many of the companies that are operating illegally in Britain? Why will the Government not ensure that all companies keep to the law?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman knows that the law in Scotland differs from the law in this country——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Which country?

Mrs. Rumbold: —and the retailers there are operating within the law in Scotland. *[Interruption.]* I say to the hon. Gentleman that I would be interested to hear of the proposals that the Labour party intends to bring forward on changes in employment laws to prevent people from working on Sunday.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): May I cool matters down? As a simple fellow who does not know much about the law, may I come to the assistance of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and my right hon. Friend the Minister? If they look at the Shops Act 1956, they will see that part II of it never applied to Scotland. Therefore, the law is not different for England and for Scotland. It is a United Kingdom Act and the solution is simple—exclude England, Wales and Northern

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

Ireland from part II. That is very easy, and it does not disenchant us at all in the most Calvinistic part of the country.

Mrs. Rumbold: If only it were as simple as that.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Has the dithering disease which affects some Ministers spread even to the Attorney-General, who advises the House on this essential issue? Some of us who were active in the Keep Sunday Special campaign in 1986 well recall that the Shops Bill 1986 was defeated by a majority of 14. Since the Government had a majority at that time of 170, it was Conservative Members rather than Opposition Members who defeated that Bill. The Shops Act 1950 applies to any trader in Britain, and that is the law. I am concerned not with whether the ex-Prime Minister's daughter is to be prosecuted for non-payment of the poll tax but with whether some of my constituents, who might forget to pay for a packet of biscuits in a shop that is open illegally, will be prosecuted under the law.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is right. When the proposal to deregulate was brought before the House, hon. Members on both sides of the House voted according to their consciences. There is nothing to refute that; the hon. Gentleman is right to make that observation.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that she is presiding over a total and utter fiasco? First, when the Shops Bill was introduced, it was not acceptable to the House, and we still live in a democracy. Secondly, what has been said today shows that we bow our heads to Europe and that we are not a sovereign Parliament. Thirdly, people in the country expect action; they do not wish to see the law being put aside as the big supermarkets are about to do. I suggest to my right hon. Friend that she has the appropriate gentlemen in and tells them precisely what to do over Christmas.

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for that point. I reiterate that the law, and the availability of the European Court of Justice to the British law, was laid down under article 177 of the 1972 treaty some 20 years ago and has been accepted practice in Britain for a long time. As to whether large retailers would accept a request not to break the law as it stands, I have made it plain at the Dispatch Box this afternoon that I commend those retailers who have taken that decision.

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the Minister aware that the strength of opposition to the 1986 Bill was also, as she has been reminded and as she herself acknowledged, testimony to the wish in the House to keep Sunday special? Whatever minority view there may be on the matter, there can be no question in the mind of anyone who has a clear recollection of what happened in 1986 but that Parliament still wishes to keep Sunday special.

Therefore, will the Minister bear in mind that the Keep Sunday Special campaign believes that its rest proposals —it is ready to change—are a viable consensus solution and will she reconsider them? Some sections of the retail sector want action on those lines. Above all, will she stop dithering in the face of the anarchic sellf-interest of the big traders?

Mrs. Rumbold: I wish that the hon. Gentleman could convince the House that, were I to bring that set of proposals to the House, they would be accepted by the majority and would provide a workable and enforceable basis for legislation. That is not my perception of either the people outside the House or their representatives within it.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My right hon. Friend's statement referred to the future, but does she agree that she has important duties at present? Does she further agree that it would be thoroughly unsatisfactory, indeed unacceptable, for the Government to contemplate complete acquiescence in an open and deliberate intention to breach the provisons of the Shops Act 1950 by Tesco or any other group? Should not the writ of Britain's statute law run at least until it is definitively shown to be overridden by a conclusive Europen Court judgment? If that is not the case, will not all our laws be in suspended animation as and when any application is made to the European Court?

As my right hon. Friend is only semi-detached from the Attorney-General in ministerial terms, will she invite him to co-operate with her in securing injunctions, and, if necessary, indemnities, for local authorities that proceed under the law?

Mrs. Rumbold: As my right hon. Friend will know, it is not for the Government to secure injunctions. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made it plain to the House that it is still the responsibility of local authorities to obtain injunctions if they wish to establish the law as it currently stands.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Many hon. Members understand that trying to find common ground between the warring parties is about as easy as securing agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Does the Minister accept, however, that any lasting compromise must depend on securing effective protection for shop workers, and ensuring that they are neither victimised nor exploited as a result of Sunday working?

Mrs. Rumbold: That will remain a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that it has been one of the common threads in the discussions in which I have participated: most parties are agreed in that regard. I should undertake to ensure that the matter was thoroughly investigated before any legislation was presented.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): The campaign to promote non-payment of the community charge—backed in principle and practice by Opposition Members—has already damaged both parliamentary democracy and local authority finances. Does my right hon. Friend agree that any attempt at large-scale law breaking would have serious implications for this Parliament and this Government? It is imperative that the law be enforced.

As the action of the three supermarket chains that propose to open on Sundays would, in effect, constitute an unfair trading practice, should it not be referred to the Director General of Fair Trading?

Mrs. Rumbold: I agree that a poor example is being set, not merely by the traders who are threatening to open on Sundays but by the 400 or so who are already keeping their food stores open. The position is not very satisfactory, and

I urge those people to think carefully about the implications. Local authorities might well take action against them.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Minister accept that the Government's responsibility to uphold the law is more important than ever when their own indolence has prevented the House from dealing with the problem of Sunday trading? Why does the Minister not condemn the large companies that have said, openly and blatantly, that they intend to break the law? Will she not reassure the retailers who wish to obey the law, and whose market share is threatened by those who intend to break it, and promise them some protection? Does she not have a responsibility to the law-abiding retailers of this country?

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made the legal position clear to the House. It is not indolence on the Government's part to try to arrange a way of producing legislation that would be acceptable to the House as soon as possible, but we have not been able to do so. Today's debate, and what is being said by hon. Members on both sides of the House, demonstrate absolutely the difficulty of presenting any sensible legislation to reform Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Has it occurred to my right hon. Friend that the unedifying parliamentary spectacle that we are now witnessing is but a preview of the House of Commons at work in the 21st century? We are impotent and confused; we are forced to wait until we receive instruction from Brussels. My right hon. Friend should not take lectures about dithering from either Labour or the Liberals. Their "Brussels at any price" policy is entirely designed to allow all these rules to be introduced automatically.

Mrs. Rumbold: Let me confine myself to saying, first, that I will not take lectures from anyone about the possibility or otherwise of getting some kind of scent about the idea of legislation. I agree that the spectacle that we are witnessing today will be replicated if by any chance we introduce legislation that bends towards one or other of the interest groups.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Minister not agree that, whatever the law might be in the future and whatever Parliament might agree in the future, the law today—unless a judgment overturns it—is that, if supermarkets open on Sundays, they are acting illegally? Is it not therefore hypocrisy on the part of the Government neither to condemn them nor to take action? Is that because the Tory party has been bought by B & Q, Argyll and the rest? The party of law and order—the Government, the Home Secretary, the Minister and the Attorney-General—are behaving as though they have been bought by the big supermarkets. There is no other explanation for it.

Mrs. Rumbold: Such an unworthy comment could have been made in this House only by a Liberal. Section 2 of the Shops Act 1950 makes it clear that that is the responsibility of local authorities. They are perfectly capable of issuing injunctions, if they so wish, at this very time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to be fair to those hon. Members who wish to participate in the next two debates. I shall take two more questions from each side; then we shall move on.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I agree with my right hon. Friend that nobody should wantonly disobey the law, but the problem is that, since the power-mad brokers of the Commission have got their sticky fingers involved, nobody knows what the law is. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be totally inappropriate for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to agree to concede more powers to that Commission until we have resolved this issue? When we have done so, does she not agree that, if somebody wants to sell their services on a Sunday and somebody else wants to buy them on a Sunday, it would be inappropriate for this House to get in the way and stop them from doing so?

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been extremely careful not to express a view one way or the other about the rights and wrongs of the issue as it affects the various interested parties. That would be totally inappropriate. In 1972, under the treaty of Rome, we gave the European Court of Justice the power to act over British law in this way. That is what we have asked it to do.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Minister realise that we have witnessed this afternoon a sad and humiliating spectacle, with one Minister saying that she does not know whether leading companies will obey the law as it stands, even if the Government ask them to do so, and another Minister saying that it is up to the local authorities to enforce the law? Do the Government realise that they look rather like first world war generals who, facing a mass attack, tell the troops in the front line to stand and die to the last man while they flee the field of battle?

Mrs. Rumbold: What I do realise is that the question that is before the House—the possibility of reforming the shops legislation—is not something that just I think difficult but something that the House clearly finds exceedingly hard to come to terms with. The House of Commons will have to come to terms with the fact that there are a number of—if not 650—different views on what is or is not right for shopping on Sundays. We are doing our very best to come to some compromise about those views. That is difficult, because, as the House has demonstrated throughout every minute of these exchanges, so many views and so many desires are expressed by each hon. Member.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that constituents in Leeds would be absolutely amazed at the general tone of these exchanges? They do not regard it as a great European issue. If they did, they would probably be cheering, in the belief that we should be more passionately committed to Europe, because of their desire, expressed over many years, by voting with their feet, to shop in all the great superstores in Leeds. Despite the fact that the Labour party has consistently pandered to the trade unions for support, the city council in Leeds has had to agree to put an end to its vindictive, selective and punitive policy.

[Dr. Keith Hampson]

Will my right hon. Friend say clearly to everybody that, as soon as she is able to do so, she will bring forward reforms so that there is at least some compromise that allows some free shopping to take place on Sundays?

Mrs. Rumbold: I, like every other hon. Member, from time to time read the newspapers and look at polls. I am aware that recent polls on this issue have shown that perhaps as many as 70 to 75 per cent. of people out there are in favour of some form of Sunday trading. I shall give my hon. Friend the undertaking that he seeks—that, as soon as I can possibly do so, I shall introduce legislation that is, I hope, workable and enforceable. That legislation will need a great deal of work if hon. Members on both sides of the House are to be able to vote for it.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Is it not passing strange for a Minister to give an explanation to the House in which she refers to different laws in different parts of the nation when the Government have continued to rule a part of the nation in an undemocratic fashion? Will she look forward to presiding over a nation of shopkeepers or a nation of law breakers? I assure the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that we are accountable, and that one cannot serve God and Mammon.

Mrs. Rumbold: I can assure the hon. Member that I know of his interests as a Northern Ireland Member; it is to that end that I hope to work towards some compromise legislation in order to satisfy all hon. Members.

Points of Order

4.25 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall call first the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell).

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): I think that the moment has passed.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I am a shopper.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I should call the shopper first.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mrs. Gorman: May I ask my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: No. The point of order is to me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Alton.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During exchanges on the private notice question, the Attorney-General threw out a challenge, asking for evidence to be produced about an allegation that I made in a question. Will you, Mr. Speaker, arrange to be printed in the *Official Report* copies of letters sent by the chairman of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister in October this year thanking B & Q for again sponsoring the Conservative party ball this year?

I should be grateful, Mr. Speaker, if you would also arrange for the appropriate Committee of the House to look at financial sponsorship—not of individual Ministers, because I accept entirely what the Attorney-General said, but surely we should look at links between political parties and vested interests. That should be a matter for the declaration of interests.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he should put it to the Committee concerned. It is not for me to monitor how the political parties in this place are financed.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is important to point out —you will have been aware of this when the Shops Bill came before the House in 1986—that about 80 Conservative Members voted against it. I was one of them. Many of us are still here and still hold the same view. The letter mentioned by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is purely a thank you letter to a sponsor and nothing more. There is no connection with this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Whatever it is, it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the law is to be more flexible, as interpreted by the Government on behalf of the big traders, will the Government also——

Mr. Speaker: No, I cannot answer for the Government. What is the matter for me?

Mr. Brown: —to pay the poll tax. *[Interruption.]* Will the Government stop that injustice?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that that arises from the statement.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The House learned this afternoon, to the amazement of many of us, that the United Kingdom has been in breach of Community law since 1972. Would it be in order for you, Mr. Speaker, to seek to establish whether, if the European Court finds against us, the Governments of the day since 1972 will be responsible for damages for every injunction served since then?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is to do with *Hansard*, and has nothing to do with the Shops Act. It is a matter entirely for you. At Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), the Prime Minister said:

"It is entirely clear from the documents in front of us in the Treaty that what we are doing is entirely enabling for ourselves to have an option to opt in".

That is what the Prime Minister said.

As you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that was a lot of gobbledegook. The right hon. Gentleman made a faux pas, and did not get his answer correct. The verbatim account of his comments appears in early-day motion 262, but what appeared in *Hansard* was entirely different. It says:

"It is entirely clear from the documents in front of us in the treaty that we are enabling ourselves to have the option to opt in."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 778.]

I can understand the Prime Minister wanting his staff to sort out his gobbledegook and, more important, his faux pas, but this is a very important issue.

Mr. Speaker: Very briefly, then.

Mr. Foulkes: Very briefly. Will you find out from the Editor of *Hansard* exactly what happened—who made the change and why it was made—and direct him to have the entry corrected so that we know exactly what the Prime Minister said yesterday?

Mr. Speaker: I will, of course, discuss the matter with the Editor, but I have told the House before that *Hansard* does sort out gobbledegook. If hon. Members' speeches were always reported verbatim, they might not be widely understood.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order for me to raise a serious and disgraceful affront to a leading hon. Member that requires you, Mr. Speaker, to act? The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), Labour's transport spokesman, went to the annual dinner of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders last night only to find that a place had not been laid for him. Understandably aggrieved, he tore a strip off the staff in front of royalty and stormed out. One could understand the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With the best will in the world, I cannot be held responsible for that.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a good try, but what goes on at dinner parties, thank goodness, is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I know that you, Mr. Speaker, like to be fair and even-handed in calling hon. Members on a statement. I notice that you did not call 50 per cent. of the Conservative or Labour Members who were seeking to put a question, but you called 50 per cent. of a fringe party—the Liberals. Is that right, or is it a new development that the Liberals will get preference over the parties that really matter?

Mr. Speaker: The Liberal Democrats spokesman speaks for them all. However, I am pleased to confirm that I did manage to call the hon. Member at Question Time today.

Mr. King: Oh, yes.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you heard from the Secretary of State for Defence or the Foreign Secretary about an incident that happened 24 hours ago, when United Kingdom nuclear weapons were exploded underground in the Nevada desert? The Nevada desert was closed, yet Parliament was not informed of the explosion.

At a time when the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons is getting out of hand, any violation of the non-proliferation treaty will only encourage other countries to proceed with their weapons. Given that serious violation, did the Secretary of State for Defence or the Foreign Secretary contact you with a view to making a statement?

Mr. Speaker: I have not had any notification.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I have dealt with the hon. Lady. I have done my best to help her.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Was it in order for the Foreign Secretary to issue from his office at four o'clock this afternoon a very important and significant statement on Libya, which could affect the security of thousands of United Kingdom citizens, without following the normal practice of making a statement to the House and subjecting himself to questions?

There has been a multitude of reports, statements and publications in the past seven days, including a devastating leader in *The Sunday Times*, to the effect that the dreadful terrorist outrage at Lockerbie was commissioned by a middle east country through another middle east terrorist group. Is not the House entitled in circumstances affecting life and property to have a statement and to ask questions?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but it will have been heard by those on the Front Bench. There will be an opportunity to ask about that during business questions tomorrow. It is not a matter for me.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In future, when hon. Members refer to "our country" when they mean England as opposed to the United Kingdom—which it is—will you pull them up and say that it is unparliamentary?

Mr. Speaker: I have noted that.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Now, I will take the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As we have been talking about shopping, and 80 per cent. of shopping in this country is done by women, I could have wished that more women had been called. In the circumstances, do you agree that, if men had to do the shopping during their working day, more women would be called during the debates and there would be more sense in the law?

Mr. Speaker: I call hon. Members to represent their constituencies, not for their gender!

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On that matter?

Mr. Ewing: Yes. Since you have been encouraging points of order, I thought that I would let you know—on a final point of order—that I shall be doing the shopping on Sunday because of the laws that apply in Scotland. If there is anything that you want for Christmas, let me know and I shall see what I can do.

Mr. Speaker: I will let that temptation pass.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. David Evans
Mr. William McKelvey
Mr. Tony Favell

BILL PRESENTED

AGGRAVATED VEHICLE-TAKING

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley and Mr. John Patten, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to persons who commit offences under section 12(1) of the Theft Act 1968 in relation to a mechanically propelled vehicle where additional circumstances are present relating to the driving of or damage to the vehicle: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 14.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Registered Foreign Lawyers Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Opposition Day

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. In view of the late start of this debate, may I ask hon. Members who are called, in the interests of their colleagues, to make brief contributions. That also applies, please, to the Front Benches.

4.37 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move,

That this House is appalled by the complacent attitude of the Government towards the high levels of mortgage debt and repossession which are due to the Government's high interest rate policy, unemployment, the slump in the property market and the general mismanagement of the economy; notes that close to one hundred thousand homes will be repossessed this year and one in twelve mortgage payers are two months or more in arrears; and calls on the Government to introduce a mortgage rescue scheme as a matter of urgency.

I had already decided not to speak for more than 20 minutes, not least because the Government are so embarrassed by this case that they are providing not only statements along the same lines as the private notice question but points of order which are designed to waste time.

The motion refers, among other things, to the growing mortgage crisis and to the need for a mortgage rescue scheme. I note that in their amendment the Government cannot even bring themselves to mention the problem of mortgage repossession or mortgage debt. They try merely to avoid it, which is what they have done since the problem emerged so drastically.

It is instructive to consider the Conservative party's promises to mortgage payers. I could take the House a long way back on that issue but I shall stick merely to the commitment that the party made in 1979 so that we can examine the record and see what it has achieved. On 23 February 1979 the Conservative central office said:

"The next Conservative Government will manage the economy to keep interest rates down and so reduce the cost of a mortgage."

The Conservatives were foolish and unwise enough to repeat the promise in the election manifesto of 1979. What happened? When the Conservatives won the election in May 1979, the mortgage rate rose sharply from 11·75 per cent. to 15 per cent. Mortgage rates have been below 10 per cent. for just two short periods since 1979. That is the extent of the failure of the Conservatives to deliver a clear promise in 1979 to keep mortgage rates and interest rates down. The ex-Prime Minister and other Conservatives had the audacity to say that interest rates were high in the early stages of the Conservative Government only because people were borrowing too much. It may be interesting to ask why interest rates are still high given all the Conservative promises about keeping them down.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In examining interest rate movements, has my hon. Friend noted that interest rates were at the bottom of the trough in 1983, around the time of the general election, and in 1987, around the time of the general election, and that they are now moving to the bottom of the trough in time for an

election in 1992? Is not it clear that the Government are manipulating interest rates to ensure that at times of general elections they are at the lowest possible level?

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend anticipates me. I will deal with that point in sequence.

While the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the mortgage rate was 15·05 per cent. for new mortgages, which was 2·37 per cent. higher than the average achieved under this Government and no less than 4·3 per cent. higher than the average under the Labour Government for the whole period from 1974 to 1979. In that respect, we draw attention not only to the high interest rate policy of the Government, but to their general failure to manage the economy. That rate was also the highest mortgage rate for any Chancellor of the Exchequer since, probably, the 1920s. It is difficult to check back with comparable prices beyond that. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister presided over the highest rate of any Chancellor of the Exchequer. That is the measure of his failure.

In their amendment, the Government claim that they are reducing interest rates, and this is where I come to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The Government reduced interest rates before the general election in 1983. Immediately after winning that general election, they increased interest rates. They reduced interest rates immediately before the 1987 election. Immediately after they won that election, they increased interest rates. They did precisely the same when they won the election in 1979. We do not need to look into a crystal ball; we have the record, which all can see.

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that interest rates in 1988 were lower than they were in 1987, at the time of the general election?

Mr. Soley: Interest rates then were only just going down. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Conservative party—anyone can look up the figures—lowered interest rates before elections and put them up immediately afterwards. That will happen next time if—and this is an unlikely eventuality—a Conservative Government are re-elected.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) may like to take another point on board. The average mortgage rate under Labour was 10·75 per cent. The figures refer to the whole period of office for each party. Under the Tories, the figure is 12·68 per cent. I refer to those figures in the context of a Government who enjoyed all the advantages of North sea oil wealth, of relatively low commodity prices around the world, and of privatisation assets, and who had none of the disadvantages of oil price rises, such as were experienced in the 1970s. Despite all that, the Government not only delivered two massive slumps, which had an effect on home ownership, but managed to deliver interest rates that were constantly 2 per cent. higher than they were on mortgages under Labour. That is a pretty damning indictment.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is not the situation now rather different from that of previous elections? We are now in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. That is the way in which the interest rate cuts have been delivered in past months. The exchange rate mechanism will remain, I hope, as a permanent fixture for the future.

Mr. Soley: I noticed that the hon. Gentleman used the words "I hope". When I looked at the Government amendment, I was fascinated to see that it says that the House

> "welcomes the fact that interest rates have been set at a level within the European Exchange Rate Mechanism which has succeeded in substantially reducing inflation".

Everyone who reads the current financial pages knows that the danger for the pound is that it is bouncing along the bottom of that rate. If the Government are not careful, or if they are simply unlucky in terms of decisions made by the German Chancellor about raising interest rates, they will be outside the rate in no time. We shall then be in a massive financial crisis as well as in an industrial crisis—and the Government have produced such a crisis on two occasions. The House should remember that the Government for the first time ever have created for Britain a balance of payments problem for manufacturing industry because they wiped out manufacturing industry in the first slump in the early 1980s and they are in danger of wiping out our other advantages in the second slump.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I should like to give way, but I remember Mr. Speaker's advice and I should stick to 20 minutes.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I will give way happily, although the hon. Gentleman should remember that it will be at the expense of other Conservative Members.

Mr. Devlin: I used the words "I hope" because the Labour party has changed its attitude on Europe by 180 degrees no fewer than five times. There is no telling whether after the next election, if the Labour party were elected to government, its present new-found commitment to the European Community will be turned on its head once again.

Mr. Soley: You would rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I went too far down that road. Suffice it to say that the Government have taken away any real choice from the British people of going into a common European currency. When the previous Prime Minister signed the Single European Act, she more than anyone else put us on that course, as Conservative Members know.

The Government's high interest rate policy, which they have pursued consistently since 1979, is the root cause of the housing crisis in owner occupation. Almost 100,000 homes will be repossessed by the end of the year. When I first gave that figure, people said that it would probably not be so high. Now I note that various people are saying that the total is likely to be 115,000. I will stick to my estimate of close to 100,000. About one in 12 people with mortgages are in mortgage arrears. The 100,000 repossessions this year compares with 2,500 in 1979. The figure of 100,000 is equal to the population of towns such as Oxford, Exeter, Norwich or Basildon. Many of those whose homes are repossessed will go into bed-and-breakfast or emergency accommodation. One in 12 mortgage payers are in arrears of two months or more. That means that roughly 1 million mortgage payers are in serious trouble. When I give the figures, I am not talking

[Mr. Soley]

about people who hand in the keys. They are excluded. I am not talking about people who pay most but not all of their mortgage each month. We are talking about a minimum figure of 1 million.

What is the other factor, along with interest rates, that is affecting us so drastically? It is unemployment. As we all know and as the Government concede, unemployment will continue to rise. All that the Government can say is that the rate of increase is less, "seasonally adjusted"—the funny phrase that they use. The Government have already clobbered manufacturing industry in the north and they are now busy clobbering industry in the south. The net result is that unemployment in the south will, this time, rise far more drastically—and the rate of interest confirms that—than in other parts of Britain. That is why so many Conservative Members are quoted in *Roof* magazine as being worried about the issue. They are worried because most people in mortgage arrears or whose homes are being repossessed are in the south or the midlands—the areas having most problems with unemployment.

The recession and the collapse of house prices that goes with it aggravate the problems in the south—and elsewhere in Britain. They mean that people cannot easily trade down. People who bought in 1988 when the market was high suddenly found in 1989, 1990 and 1991 that they were selling at a loss. So they could not even get out of their debt, let alone pay the mortgage. One would have thought that, faced with those figures, Ministers would express concern.

I have drawn attention to the fact that in their amendment to our motion the Government cannot even bring themselves to mention the mortgage problem. What do Ministers say? One interesting idea comes both from the Minister for Housing and Planning and from his deputy, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). On a "World in Action" programme the Minister for Housing and Planning said that the best mortgage rescue service was a drop in interest rates. His deputy used that phrase too, on "The Time . . . The Place"—a programme on which I joined him. He told an audience of 50 or 60 people, all of whom had had their homes repossessed, that help was on the way because mortgage rates were coming down. I have to tell him that to someone whose home has been repossessed it makes no odds whether the interest rates are going up, down or sideways. It is too late for them. It is too late for many people, because even if interest rates came down by another 1 per cent. tomorrow—they will not—the repossession figures would continue to rise. Sadly, the prediction for the number of repossessions in a year's time is still about 100,000.

On 2 July the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

"I do not accept the gloomy forecasts that are made of future repossessions. Those who coped during the period of rising interest rates should be able to cope as they fall. I would therefore hope to see fewer repossessions."

The hon. Gentleman said that only four months ago, yet it does not look too convincing now, does it?

What else do Ministers say? Another response, which has not been used so much recently, was by the previous Minister responsible for housing, who is now the Secretary of State for Employment. Under a nice headline in the papers saying:

"Lodgers can ease mortgage bills, says Minister",

the right hon. and learned Gentleman was reported as stating:

"Lodgers now had no security of tenure"

—that was a result of the Housing Act 1988—

"making it easier for householders to repossess the property . . . 'With a minimum of effort people can raise extra income to offset the increased cost of their mortgages. That has to be good news for lenders.'"

What has happened since then? One problem, which we tackle in the mortgage rescue scheme, is that when people who have taken out a mortgage have a lodger, when the house is repossessed the lodger, too, will be made homeless. What is more important, in a significant minority of cases, the lodger does not even know that the mortgage is in arrears. There is a recent case in Camden, and I could name many others. The first that the lodgers know of the threat of eviction is when it takes effect and the bailiffs appear at the door. That kind of thing was encouraged by the Minister who was responsible for housing at the time. The Government have still not dealt with it. They hoped that the building societies would change the rules. The story from which I have just quoted was based on a call to the building societies and banks to change the rules, but they did not do so.

The Government amendment says that they have achieved "diversification of tenure" among other things. Does that mean that more people are sleeping rough in the streets and more are in bed-and-breakfast and emergency accommodation?

Let us remember the Rowntree report—the Duke of Edinburgh's report—the second edition of which was published in July or August this year. It said that almost 2 million—1·9 million—homes had disappeared from the rented sector since 1979, half from the council sector and the other half from the Government's much-loved private rented sector. When the Labour party left office, private rented accommodation accounted for 14 per cent. of the rented market. Now it is only 7 per cent. There has been a marginal increase in middle and upper rent areas, but almost certainly that rise is due to the depression in house prices. When prices start to rise again a lot of the people in such accommodation will be evicted, because they have assured shorthold tenancies and it only takes six months to get them out. Then homelessness will increase again. That is what the Government are boasting about.

We cannot get rid of 2 million homes from the rented sector in 12 years, and neglect to put anything in their place, without expecting a dramatic and growing housing crisis. The collapse in the construction industry—another aspect of our concern about the state of the economy—confirms that crisis. I could use more than all the time allowed me simply in quoting the views of the construction industry, many of whose companies bankroll the Tory party. It is interesting that the number and amount of such contributions have been dropping rapidly. That is not entirely surprising when we read what Sir Clifford Chetwood, the chairman of Wimpey, backed by the building material producers, is reported as having said about the construction industry:

"This is an industry in crisis . . . In terms of workload and order books things are getting worse. There are harsh times ahead . . . Britain was on the brink of a housing crisis that would leave a shortfall of more than 1 milion homes between those being built and those needed."

Lest hon. Members should think that I am quoting an out-of-date report, I must tell them that what I have said

is taken from yesterday's report in *The Guardian* of Sir Clifford's speech and the survey undertaken by the National Council of Building Materials Producers.

Many other examples show that the construction industry is in desperate trouble. Increasingly, it supports the call from ourselves and from Conservative-controlled local authorities that authorities should be allowed to spend their capital receipts on housing investment, to boost the industry.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me of any year during the past 30 years when the construction industry said that it did not want local and national government to spend more money?

Mr. Soley: Yes, that was so for about two years in the mid-1980s. In the first part of the 1980s the industry was desperate because of the slump; in the mid-1980s it enjoyed the boom; now, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is experiencing the bitter wind of another Tory slump. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because it proves my point and illustrates what we mean by the Government's inability to manage the economy. They talk well, they talk the economy up and talk about management, but their record on interest rates, on the productive base of the economy and on great industries such as the construction industry tells a story of failure, of how weak we have become.

Even if we were to launch a major housing investment programme now, the construction industry could not deliver quickly without sucking in imports. It has not invested here because the Government have not given it the confidence to do so. There is also a lack of skilled labour. Soon 250,000 construction workers will have been lost to the industry as a result of the recession. Sadly, contrary to popular opinion, the skilled labourers lost in that way do not automatically come back into the industry when it re-expands. We have had to take that problem on board in devising the policy that we shall put into effect in government. The danger is that, even if one wanted a rapid building programme and had masses of money to carry it out, one would still be restrained by those bottlenecks. There would be a danger that untried, untested techniques for building high-rise or prefabricated dwellings would be adopted. We have set our face against that, but I can see the present Government trying to get away with it; they have cut corners with that sort of housing before.

The Government are trying to introduce schemes that they hope will buy off the voter and somehow divert attention from the mortgage crisis. The Minister recently introduced a half-baked scheme, with the support of the Council of Mortgage Lenders—or rather, of one individual who works for that council, who believes that it is a good idea. Many of the building societies are not so convinced.

Basically, the idea is this: when a property is repossessed, the building society or bank informs the housing associations, which then decide whether they can take the property over on a temporary basis and rent it to someone in emergency accommodation. I call the scheme half-baked, Madam Deputy Speaker, because, if you were in the unfortunate position—which I hope you are not—of having been put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation having had your house repossessed, a housing association might come along and say, "We have a property in which to rehouse you, and you could find yourself back in your own property. Theoretically, that could happen, although statistically you would be more likely to end up in someone else's property". Surely the Government have the wit to understand that that is a chronically inefficient way of dealing with the problem.

I do not think that I am making an accusation that the Government would challenge when I say that the main aim of the scheme is to boost house prices by holding back from the market repossessed properties, which now account for about one in five of the properties being sold and which are depressing the property market.

We propose something rather better than that half-baked scheme. For a year now, we have been saying that the Government should urgently call in representatives of the housing associations, the main lenders—the building societies and banks—and the local authorities to set up a proper mortgage rescue scheme. Let me describe how that would work. The first aim must be to allow people to buy time—and buy it for no money—in a way that is advantageous even to the building societies and banks. If the Government were serious, they would take on board our suggestion and say to lenders, "You can repossess but you cannot evict straight away."

Let me explain the advantage of that. It normally takes building societies and banks a minimum of six months to sell a repossessed property, and it often takes much longer. Moreover, when they sell, they do so at below the normal price. We say that they should let the person stay in the property as an assured shorthold tenant for, say, six months or a year. That will give the lending institution a definite date at which it knows that it can sell with vacant possession; but, above all, it will give the individual or family concerned time to work out their options. It will also give time to consider the second part of our package—the mortgage rescue itself—which will clearly be of value to everyone.

Another advantage of that arrangement is that it will give the bank or building society an income, in the form of the rent, instead of perhaps facing a loss in the form of a management fee payable to a housing association or local authority. A property that would otherwise stand empty could be pulling in a rental income as well as providing a roof over people's heads. Finally, we, the poll tax payers, would not have to pay for families to go into bed-and-breakfast accommodation—the worst type of subsidy to give for mortgage rescue purposes—as we do at the moment. It is a crazy system. What are we doing turning the dream of home ownership into the nightmare of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, paid for by the poll tax payer? That must be gross incompetence as well as lack of concern.

The second part of our mortgage rescue package is the option of shared ownership. Many people are in trouble with their payments and are headed for repossession and, at present, there is no alternative to that, even though, in many cases, their incomes may not have dropped so catastrophically that they cannot pay part of the money that they owe. I am talking, for example, about people who lose overtime earnings and so on. In such circumstances, it would be sensible to allow a local authority or housing association to buy the property and immediately sell part of the equity to the occupier, who would then pay part rent and part mortgage and who could step back to full ownership when his financial situation improved. That would help a lot of people.

[Mr. Soley]

Another critical part of our package concerns help for those in dire trouble because of a family breakdown—the classic example—or because the wage earner in the family has lost his job and has no possibility of finding another in the reasonably near future. Families who lose their income completely often end up in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It is not only more humane but infinitely better financially, both for the country and for the families, to allow a housing association or council to buy the property and to transfer the people living in it to the tenanted sector.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that the cost of those two schemes would be a sinking fund of £100 million. The House should bear in mind the fact that, for mortgage repossession cases only, in London alone, the cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation is more than £50 million, and that is without taking into account many of the other associated costs.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. If I heard him right, he said that the cost of his shared ownership scheme would be about £100 million. Where would that money come from? Logically, one could argue that, in the case of certain local authorities, it could come out of money saved from bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but we should remember that a fair number of local authorities in whose areas there are house repossessions are fortunate enough not to be on the downward spiral of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Would the money come from the Treasury or out of the community charge payer's funds?

Mr. Soley: The Council of Mortgage Lenders thinks that it ought to come from the Government, and I have some sympathy with that view. As I said, the Government should call in the lenders, local authorities and housing associations to work out the arrangements, but, as I said, the CML thinks that it should come from the Government, through the Housing Corporation, and there is some logic in that.

Mr. Burns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I want to move on because I am already exceeding the time limit that I set myself.

Why will not the Government consider such a scheme? There are a number of reasons, both hidden and real. They tend to argue that it could be too expensive in terms of each individual house. That is easily dealt with: one simply has a cut-off point. No one is suggesting that one should buy back a £1 million house.

More important, the Government sometimes say that people would deliberately over-mortgage, knowing that they could be saved—that they would buy much bigger houses than they need. That is not real. Some months ago, I explained that a mortgage rescue scheme would not necessarily entail a person staying in his own house. Let us take the example of a family split—by no means a fiddle. Let us say that there are four children, two of whom go with the partner who leaves and the other two of whom stay at home with the wife, who has no income, in a five- or six-bedroom house. In those circumstances, one could buy the property but move them elsewhere in the rented stock, releasing the larger property for a bigger family. Indeed, one could resell when the time was right.

The mortgage lenders themselves know that a mortgage rescue scheme will have to happen sooner or later. They know that they are in trouble and, to their credit, they also recognise that they must pay some of the costs because they have made bad debts, and because such a scheme would allow them to avoid court costs. That is why they are prepared to consider the possibility of receiving less than the normal price for the house.

We are witnessing some horrific scenes. The Minister will be aware of the case of a woman who appeared on the same television programme as me, who has a six-month-old child and a two-year-old child and whose repossession date is 25 December. If someone had told me that such things happened in the 19th century, I should have said, "They cannot have happened very often." But they are happening now, this Christmas. What are we doing?

In Kent, I found a family who had been placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation by the Conservative council. The home of two couples was repossessed. They had been renting the house from a man who was not living there and who had not paid the mortgage. Each couple was paying £80 a week in rent, making a total of £160 per week. To my mind, that amount would more than have paid the mortgage in that area. Nevertheless, the house was repossessed. One couple went into bed-and-breakfast accommodation because they had a young child and the poll tax payer had to pick up the bill.

Let us consider the case of the business man in north London who told the building society that it had overvalued his property by £20,000. The building society was a large and reputable company and denied the overvaluation. The man argued for a bit, but accepted its valuation in the end. He said, "I am doing all the things that the Government want. I am a small business man and was buying my own house. My business has now gone bust, my house has been repossessed and the building society is not only claiming the house, but the £20,000 by which it was overvalued."

I have heard horror story after horror story like that. I understand that, following the "World in Action" programme the other day, its switchboard was jammed with callers describing similar cases. What we are doing is ludicrous——

Mr. Sayeed *rose*——

Mr. Soley: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way because I have been pursuing——

Mr. Sayeed: I shall be brief.

Mr. Soley: Well, the hon. Gentleman had better be so brief as not to be true.

Mr. Sayeed: I am truly grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has suggested that there are 100,000 repossessions per year and that the cost of his mortgage rescue package would be £100 million. Although that works out at £1,000 per home, clearly many of the 100,000 cases would not be entitled to help. Therefore, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House who would be entitled to such help?

Mr. Soley: As has been said several times, it is obvious that priority would be given to people who would be eligible under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, but the first part of the scheme that I have

described—where there is repossession, but not eviction—could apply more widely. My own view is that, given the right thinking, we might be able to go further in the talks that we would initiate in Government straightaway and deal with cases that go wider than the provisions of the homeless persons legislation. In that way, we might be able to get across the barrier between owning and renting by establishing some form of shared ownership. That is what we would do.

There are already a number of mortgage rescue schemes. I suggest that the Government should seek to extend the London Quadrant Housing Association scheme to the whole of London. Why not? It would save money. We could also learn from the Clackmannan scheme, which is well known and well run. The scheme in Rochdale fell through because of the lack of Government subsidy and we are, therefore, still paying for bed-and-breakfast charges. Is that sensible? Of course not.

The constituency of the Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), has the seventh highest number of repossession court cases in the country. I advise him and the Government that they are risking the wrath of the electorate on this issue. There is no reason why home owners should be clobbered in that way. The Government should not have encouraged home ownership on such a scale, or got rid of the rented sector as they did, or followed that by putting up interest rates to make home ownership unaffordable for many people. Having pushed people towards home ownership by getting rid of the rented sector and driving rents up to market levels, the Government then put up interest rates, and yet they wonder why there are now queues of homeless people having to be paid for by the poll tax payers.

The mortgage rescue scheme is an idea whose time has come. The only people who are opposed to it are a Government whose time has run out.

5.12 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the fact that interest rates have been set at a level within the European Exchange Rate Mechanism which has succeeded in substantially reducing inflation; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continued success of its policies to put a decent home within reach of every family, by promoting home occupation, by the success of the Right to Buy, by securing greater private sector investment, by promoting diversification of tenure and tenant involvement, by directing public expenditure so as to secure more effective use of resources and improved performance from housing authorities and by increasing the budget of the Housing Corporation by 94 per cent. over three years.".

I invite the House to reject the motion and to support the Government amendment for a number of reasons. First, the policies of the Labour party would increase rather than reduce interest rates and would therefore make the position for home owners worse rather than better.

Secondly, the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) failed in its duty to put the current problems in their proper perspective. It also ignored the underlying improvement which I am confident is under way as earnings increase and mortgage payments fall.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman did not do justice to the wealth of help and support which is now available from lenders and the Government to borrowers in difficulties. He did not mention income support and, in particular, he underestimated the impact of the statement by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security earlier this month on income support for unemployed borrowers, to which I shall return.

Finally, having urged the Government to introduce a mortgage rescue scheme, it became abundantly clear that the hon. Gentleman has no authority to commit the Labour party to any increase in public expenditure. When my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) asked him who would pay for the mortgage rescue scheme, the hon. Gentleman quoted the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which said that it would cost £100 million and that the Government should pay. He then said, "I have some sympathy with that. There is some logic." However, the Labour party made no commitment this afternoon to funding any mortgage rescue scheme.

I turn now to interest rates. Of all the impudence of which the Labour party may be guilty, it is difficult to match that part of the Opposition's motion which berates the Government for their interest rate policy. Opposition Members have opposed many of the measures on public expenditure and privatisation which have produced the fall in interest rates. A Labour Government would mean higher borrowing, higher interest rates and more pressure on home buyers. I repeat what I and my right hon. and hon. Friends said previously. I believe that the best mortgage rescue scheme of all is the prudent management of the economy, low inflation and lower interest rates. Over recent months, the Government, pursuing policies often opposed by Opposition Members, have reduced interest rates by 4·5 per cent. That is already leading to a renewal of confidence and real prospects for stemming the rise in unemployment. More jobs will feed into greater confidence in the housing market.

The House should not underestimate the impact of those cuts in interest rates. They mean that the average borrower now pays £70 a month less than he did a year ago. With base rates falling and incomes for those in work rising, that source of pressure is clearly reducing.

Mr. Soley: The Government may have cut interest rates about seven times in a relatively short period, but they are still higher than the average under Labour. Why?

Sir George Young: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that interest rates have fallen by more than 4·5 per cent., which is the figure that I used, he will find that he is mistaken. The point that I was making is that that welcome reduction would not have been possible if we had heeded the advice of the Labour party, because it opposed many of the measures that made that reduction possible.

I have charged the hon. Gentleman with failing to put the problem of mortgage repossessions in its proper perspective, so I shall now do that. Ten million home owners have a mortgage—one that they chose to take on after working out what they could afford. Against that, fewer than 0·4 per cent. of borrowers—about one quarter of 1 per cent. of all home owners—had their homes repossessed in the first six months of this year. That includes those who have given in their keys. More than 99·6 per cent. were not repossessed. As 2·3 per cent. of borrowers are in arrears of six months or more, that means that nearly 98 per cent. are repaying their mortgage as they agreed. The vast majority are coping. I do not in any sense belittle the distress of repossession or the problems

[Sir George Young]

associated with it and I shall deal with that point later, but the figures tell a very different story from that of the hon. Member for Hammersmith. Home ownership remains a sensible long-term investment for those who want the independence that it brings and who are confident that the financial commitment it involves is a reasonable one.

Let me turn to the third and more substantial point—to those who do face difficulty and to the measures that are available to help them. Of course, I fully understand the trauma facing any family whose home is about to be repossessed. Many hon. Members have seen families in that position in their advice bureaux. Although the Government were not a signatory to the transaction freely entered into between borrower and lender, they should not and do not stand idly by when the borrower faces difficulties. But let me first of all make it clear that it is certainly not in every case that financial problems are the primary cause of repossessions. Marriage break-up and other relationship failures lie behind some; in others, there was initially an unrealistically large commitment. Over half the properties recently taken into possession by building societies were previously occupied by borrowers who either voluntarily relinquished or simply abandoned them, posting the keys back through the building society letter box.

I hope, therefore, that one message at least will be clearly understood after this debate. All those in difficulty with mortgage payments should contact their lender at an early stage and talk through the problem with him. Many borrowers would be surprised at the flexibility and sympathy that are shown by many lenders.

The advice of the Council of Mortgage Lenders is clear. If lenders are approached early, before arrears begin to build up, most will be only too happy to help borrowers by rescheduling payments, allowing interest to be capitalised where appropriate, or accepting less than the required monthly payment for an extended period if there is a reasonable prospect of the borrower then being able to resume full payment.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale) *rose*——

Sir George Young: I shall give way once more, but then, out of courtesy to the House, I should like to make progress.

Mr. Hood: What can the Minister say to those individuals who bought their houses three or four years ago—they were encouraged to do so because money was thrown at them—but whose houses are to be repossessed? Those people are unable to repay their full debt which sometimes is as much as £40,000. They are made homeless and are left with a debt that they have no chance of repaying. Do the Government believe that that is the fault of the individual, or, like Pontius Pilate, do they claim that it has nothing to do with them? Who does the Minister blame?

Sir George Young: I am about to describe the solutions that are available to people who find themselves in such distressing circumstances.

The Government are reinforcing the advice available to people in such circumstances by grant-aiding the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux for its work on money management counselling.

Some owners can, of course, make their own arrangements to cope—often, many do. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith said, some have choosen to take in lodgers to help to meet their repayments while others have moved in with their in-laws and rented out their homes temporarily.

The hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) asked who is to blame for the repossessions. At the time of the great lending spree, when some lenders were offering loans of up to four times salary and property prices were soaring, a few voices urged caution. Some people will believe that building societies and banks, which thrust loans upon their customers, can hardly walk away from the problem of arrears by simply demanding repossession, particularly when there is little prospect of selling the property to recover the debt.

Surely it is better, wherever possible, to keep borrowers in their homes. I believe that the building societies are now beginning to accept that view, which will result in a reduction in the number of repossessions. They have a direct interest in reducing the number of properties repossessed—humanitarian, as well as financial.

In fact, the help given by lenders is already considerable. The wide gap between those in arrears in one quarter and the much smaller number of repossessions in the next is testimony to the help which many thousands of households now receive. That help, of course, is not entirely altruistic. Building societies have a responsibility to their members, too, and banks and mortgage insurers have a responsibility to their shareholders. But those duties are leading to a great deal of effort to find new ways in which to help individual borrowers to stay in their own homes, either as tenants or in shared ownership. In each case the insurer or building society takes an equity share. All this we encourage.

Some local authorities and housing associations are also helping borrowers to stay in their homes through shared ownership schemes. The local authority provides the capital cover for the housing association to buy the home and to sell a proportion of the equity back to the existing owner. Mole Valley, Rochdale, Clackmannanshire and Bromley all do this. Local authorities have to weigh up carefully the benefit of doing so in the light of local circumstances and the costs that might otherwise fall on the authority. It is an option only where the borrower has suffered a reduction in income but not a dramatic fall. In those circumstances, the borrower continues to pay a smaller mortgage together with a subsidised rent. Together, those payments are likely, in a typical case, to amount to about 70 per cent. of the cost of the original mortgage. That is why, for most people, talking as early as possible to their lender is the best way forward.

What action can the Government take? Direct Government help is targeted, deliberately, on the unemployed. If someone is unemployed and on income support, the cost of the interest on the mortgage will be met through enhanced income support. In 1990, more than half a billion pounds was made available in that way. This year, the figure will be higher. The hon. Member for Hammersmith totally ignored that contribution by Government and the taxpayer.

One problem is that not all this very considerable sum is used by claimants for the purpose for which it is made

available. The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that perhaps as much as half may be lost in that way, with the result that repossessions take place unnecessarily.

The change in administrative arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People on 5 November is therefore critical, because, in future, lenders will know when borrowers are applying for income support. The Department of Social Security will know if there is a history of arrears and will be able to make a direct payment to the lender, if that is desirable. No one eligible for income support need lose their home. The benefits of those changes will be felt next year.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith tried to wave a magic wand with promises of a mortgage rescue scheme. I found that part of his speech unconvincing. The hon. Gentleman berated the Government for not introducing such a rescue scheme, but he was unable to commit his party to its introduction.

The hon. Member for Clydesdale referred to repossessions and I would like to mention a separate but important initiative aimed at making use of properties which have already been repossessed and which might otherwise stay empty.

Earlier this summer, my Department set up a number of pilot schemes designed to bring back into use some of the 600,000 properties lying empty in the private rented sector. Under that scheme, housing associations act as managing agents for private owners who might not otherwise want the hassle of letting their property. That scheme will open up a valuable source of additional housing, by giving private owners the confidence to let their property and tenants the promise of a fair deal.

The building societies, which have up to 40,000 empty properties awaiting disposal, asked whether they could build upon the pilot schemes. Rather than allowing all those properties to remain empty until they were sold, the building societies agreed that it makes sense to put them to good use. Many have already stood empty for some considerable time. As a forced sale, their value is less than it would otherwise be. There is a danger that they will be vandalised, or that squatters will move in.

Under the new extension to the scheme, the empty repossessed houses on the building societies' books can be let to housing associations for periods of between one and three years, and occupied by families. Later, when the property is eventually sold, the lender should get a better price than he would from a forced sale now. The scheme also reduces the losses of the borrowers. In the meantime, the property is maintained and squatting is eliminated. The process also helps to stabilise house prices by controlling the rate at which empty property is offered in the market. Far from being half-baked, the scheme works to the benefit of all involved.

The Government's philosophy is to maximise investment in housing from all sources—from the private sector as well as from the public sector—and to achieve maximum value from that investment. We are offering people opportunities for home ownership and opportunities for new forms of social landlord such as housing action trusts. We want to promote partnership—between local authorities and housing associations, between public and private finance and between social and private landlords. More importantly, we want to promote partnership between all those groups and the tenants themselves. We are seeking to improve the effectiveness of public sector investment and are attacking incompetence by local authorities.

Those policies run with the grain of people's aspirations and with the grain of market forces. For that reason, they are more likely to succeed than the somewhat muddled, uncosted proposals which the Opposition often put forward. Their blinkered approach to housing action trusts and large-scale voluntary transfers—being actively considered by Labour councils and supported in ballots of tenants—shows how out of touch they are.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith seems to think that he could increase spending on housing, without incurring the displeasure of the shadow Chief Secretary, by spending capital receipts. That is nonsense. The money is not just sitting in the bank doing nothing. The capital receipts are used to reduce the level of debt. Let me spell it out clearly. Those capital receipts have either paid off debt or are earning interest which authorities can use to service their debts.

If local authorities were told to spend those notional receipts, they would either have to borrow again, or the Exchequer would have to give authorities more subsidy every year to meet their debts. Either way, we would then have higher borrowing or public spending with the usual impact on interest rates and the public sector borrowing requirement—and the raised eyebrow of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

One cannot use those capital receipts without it having an impact on public expenditure. That money is not just sitting in the bank doing nothing.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Why will not the Minister recognise that so much of the hardship and misery with which almost all Members of Parliament are involved through their case work, correspondence and surgeries is due to the fact that, in the past 12 years, council house building has come to a virtual stop?

If the Minister says, "What about the private rented sector?", he should know that in Monday's *Evening Standard* there were hardly any flats—leaving aside one-room accommodation—under £120 a week. They are usually modest flats, but most cost more. Does the Minister realise that people who are in so much need cannot afford to buy, even with lower interest rates? They can get nowhere with the local authority because of Government policy and can get nowhere with the private rented sector.

Sir George Young: On Monday I visited Walsall—part of the borough which the hon. Gentleman represents. During my discussions with the council it appeared that money that I had allocated to Walsall for housing had been spent not on housing but on other services. The local authority was asking me for more money for housing when it had reallocated money already voted for housing to other purposes. I found that deeply unimpressive.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way, because I can give him an explanation?

Sir George Young: I asked the chairman of the housing committee for an explanation and found it deeply unconvincing.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister listen to my explanation?

Sir George Young: No, I should like to make progress. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and make his own speech.

Mr. Soley: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has made it clear to the House—there is nothing wrong with my hearing—that he will not give way again.

Sir George Young: The hon. Member for Hammersmith said that he would speak for 20 minutes and then spoke for 35 minutes. I hope that other hon. Members can be called, but they will not if I continue to give way.

Those who live on council estates are rightly concerned not so much with the global sums, the billions of pounds, but with what is actually achieved: the quality of service and the range of choice that they are offered by their landlord. In some cases, local authorities use their resources and manage their stock well. Sadly, in others they do not. In some—mostly Labour-run authorities—resources have been poured in by the Government year after year with little to show for it, because those authorities have mismanaged the funds. They do not apply them where they will have the greatest and most beneficial effect and they do not involve the tenants, or voluntary or private sectors to get the benefit of their knowledge and experience. In short, they use no initiative and show no inspiration in dealing with housing problems.

One has only to look at Meadow Well in Newcastle or at some of the worst estates in Liverpool to see what effect they have had. Keva Coombes, the former leader of Liverpool council, said:

"Tenants get an appalling service, and they know that. I think probably the fundamental cause is, frankly, we've put the interests of the providers of the service, the workforce, above the interests of the tenants".

He also said:

"We are the worst landlord in Liverpool, probably in the country . . . voids gone up, rent arrears soared and breaking the law on racial equality".

Manchester has 6,000 empty properties—more than any other local authority. Four Labour-controlled local authorities in London failed to collect nearly one third of rents in 1989-90. To overcome problems like that, we have introduced a significant change in our approach. In future, in allocating capital resources to local authorities, we shall rely less on allocation by formula and more on an assessment of the quality of authorities' plans, to direct resources to those councils where they will be used best. In that way, we shall get better value for money, tenants will see tangible results and standards will rise as authorities realise that they need to make a greater effort in order to gain support. We want to hear not only about problems but about solutions.

The Labour party has resisted wave after wave of innovative Government policies until finally public opinion overwhelms it. One of the most recent examples of that attitude has been towards housing action trusts. Originally implacably opposed to the idea that rundown estates should be handed over to the tenants, housing associations and the private sector, Labour now finds itself in the embarrassing position that many of its own councils are pressing for HATs in their areas and tenants are voting to leave the control of those councils. So far, the Labour party has taken only one grudging step back and agreed to honour any existing contracts into which existing HATs have entered, in the unlikely event of their gaining power. But the waves are lapping round their feet and soon they will have to beat a full retreat as HATs become more popular and the Labour party's opposition to them another potential vote loser.

We must make better use of existing stock. In too many cases, authorities take too long to re-let vacant properties. Homes stand vacant while families awaiting rehousing have to stay in bed and breakfast. If all authorities achieved an average target of six weeks in London and three weeks elsewhere, the effect would be equivalent to 17,000 extra lettings in England, compared with 13,000 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It may sound obvious, but it is important that local authorities should know who is living in their stock. It is just bad management that on many estates authorities have no accurate record of the people occupying their properties and some of those people have no legal right to be there.

Finally, on the problem of those who literally have no home—the rough sleepers—considerable progress has been made as a result of my Department's £96 million initiative to help people sleeping rough in central London. Hon. Members need not take my word; they can ask the voluntary organisations. In total, 1,500 places have been provided in less than a year and taken up by people who were sleeping rough or were at risk of doing so. Moreover, 176 spaces are still in use in shelters that we opened last winter. By March 1994, the total additional permanent housing generated by that initiative will provide accommodation for 1,800 people. The measure has already made a significant contribution to the housing needs of single homeless people in London. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many voluntary groups and housing associations that have helped us to make this possible. It is our stated aim to make it unnecessary for anybody to sleep rough on the streets of central London. We have introduced more than money and hostels; we have introduced an integral approach, with training, employment and health.

More needs to be done to achieve our aims. I am today announcing a new package of measures to help single homeless people sleeping rough in London and around the country. In London, where the problem remains at its most acute, I have set aside £1 million for voluntary groups to enable them to provide up to 300 places in emergency shelters this winter. Those places will be open regardless of temperature. I am pleased to say that nearly 200 places will be available next week. That provision is part of a co-ordinated programme which we are funding through Single Homelessness in London. We are making it as easy as possible for rough sleepers to use those extra places: they are free; people will not be required to give personal details if they do not wish to; and we are providing the outreach workers with vans to take rough sleepers to the shelters from pick-up points across the capital. Information on vacancies will be readily available, primarily from the Shelter Housing Aid Centre's hostels vacancy project and, out of office hours, by Shelter's nightline. Both projects are funded by my Department. SHIL has done well in its speedy organisation, as have the other voluntary organisations involved in setting up the programme.

I am also announcing today that funding for the programme of grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to voluntary organisations for the homeless throughout the country will increase from £4·5 million this year to £6·1 million in 1992-93—an increase in real terms of around 30 per cent.—and to a total of nearly £20 million over the next three years.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it abundantly clear that he will not give way.

Dr. Hampson: Not to every hon. Member.

Sir George Young: I hope that my hon. Friend will understand that I wish to bring my remarks to a conclusion.

Some 93 voluntary organisations, more than 60 of them outside London, already receive grants under this programme for a variety of projects providing practical help to homeless people. I am today inviting voluntary groups outside central London to apply for the extra resources available for 1992-93. In assessing their bids I shall give priority to imaginative new projects offering direct, practical help to single homeless people in areas with significant numbers of rough sleepers.

Dr. Hampson *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sir George Young: The policies being pursued by the Government are designed to provide the improvements in housing and higher standards that people want. More people are now housed, in better conditions, than ever before. More people own their own homes and the vast majority of them are meeting their housing costs. We have moved away from the old municipal paternalism so loved by Opposition Members towards arrangements that give people choice and opportunities to control and influence their own housing. Monopoly of housing tenure led to a decline in standards, and an absence of fresh ideas and solutions. That must have been as clear to the Labour party as it was to us, yet it has systematically opposed all our policies aimed at redressing the situation, from right to buy to HATs, grudgingly accepting them years later when they have shown that they are effective and popular. The Labour party wants to retain a power base for its councils rather than provide what tenants want. The diversity made possible by this Government, through owner occupation for many, influence over management and the use of resources for others, offers the best way forward. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Dr. Hampson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hate to do this to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but in the interests of Back Benchers I feel that I must. It is exceptional and unusual for the Chair to decide when hon. Members do or do not accept interventions. As the Minister made no comment on the last part of the Government motion, and as the distribution of housing corporation funds to northern cities is critically important, he might at least have been given a chance to comment on my case.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) was in the Chamber when the Minister made it clear on more than one occasion that he would not give way again. As he made that statement, I consider that his decision holds good for all hon. Members.

5.41 pm

Dr. Ashok Kumar (Langbaurgh): In addressing the House today I bring a strong message from all the people of Langbaurgh who cast their votes in the by-election on 7 November. During my time in the House I intend to speak for all those voters and represent, to the best of my abilities, the needs and aspirations of my constituency and the wider northern region.

It has been said that Langbaurgh was discovered by the national media during the by-election, and many representatives of the media were amazed to find—to quote *The Times*—

"the constituency was surprisingly beautiful."

I suspect that many of the people who flocked into the constituency from outside—the media, the party hacks and the pollsters—were surprised to find, not grim steelworks or a photo-chemical smog, but pleasant villages and estates, and attractive countryside and coastline. That is not to say there are no problems in my constituency—there are. Many of them are common to the whole northern region: unemployment, under-investment, isolation and Government indifference. It was due to the popular recognition that the Labour party intends to tackle those problems boldly and head on that I was returned to the House.

I represent a constituency that is a microcosm of British society. It includes former mining villages, large council estates, market towns, seaside resorts and leafy suburbs. It was that cross section of British society which returned a Labour Member to the House, and which will return a Labour Government at the next general election.

Langbaurgh was previously represented by Richard Holt, whose death precipitated the by-election which became a vote of confidence in the Government whom he supported. His time in the House was marked by a style of politics which, it could be said, led to his success in bucking the electoral trends in both 1983 and 1987. Certainly, the House will be less colourful and quieter with his departure.

I also feel a deep sense of humility in following in the footsteps of Labour's pioneers in the area now covered by my constituency. The Labour party has never been afraid to field candidates who will, with vigour, promote the principles that they were elected to defend. I recall the Labour party's first Member of Parliament for the east Cleveland district, Billy Mansfield—an ironstone miner who left school at 13 and throughout his life, from the pit face to Parliament, fought for his class and his people. I also remember Ellen Wilkinson who colourfully represented the old Middlesbrough, East constituency throughout the early 1920s. She proved that a woman could successfully promote the needs, aspirations and dreams of a heavy, industrial region that conventional wisdom then held could not be won by anybody other than a man.

I am proud and humble to be following that historic tradition and I will not shirk from being single-minded in fighting for the rights of my constituents. The great tragedy is that many of the social evils that those pioneers fought are with us again today. The simple fact is that far too many of my constituents are still unemployed, exist on low wages and are being denied access to the vital health and social services that they need to live a more healthy and less stressful life.

[Dr. Ashok Kumar]

It is little use senior Ministers telling local people that the recession is technically over. They should try telling someone who has lost his house that it was a technical repossession or someone who is still waiting for an urgent operation that he or she feels only a technical pain. Many of my constituents suffer from severe housing problems. Too many people are still inadequately housed, too many young people are still waiting for their first proper home and too many people in the villages of east Cleveland are still living in pre-1919 terraced houses that are long overdue for renewal and modernisation. A crying local need that is given public voice through Langbaurgh borough council's housing needs survey is for low cost accommodation for low wage earners.

The distress that unemployment, poor housing, idleness and ill-health brings should be self-evident to everyone. It is evident to everyone except, it seems, for the Government's Front Bench team. In parts of Langbaurgh —in many of the isolated villages of east Cleveland and on south Middlesbrough council estates—high and continuing unemployment has become a feature of everyday life. For the one in seven of the total working age population who are unemployed in the south Middlesbrough area of Hemlington, or for the 19·8 per cent. of men who are jobless in the steelmaking town of Skinningrove, life is becoming ever more mean and brutish. The social isolation and poverty that comes with such unemployment is biting deep into the very fabric of our local society, and it is not so unexpected, is it, that such alienation has led to problems of split families, mental and physical distress, and the various manifestations of crime, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour? That is not to say that crime can be excused—it cannot. But crime must not be used as an excuse for doing nothing about unemployment.

During my time in the House I intend, in particular, to campaign vigorously for the total regeneration of my constituencys' economy. I will be fighting with my other Labour parliamentary colleagues on Teesside for more inward investment, for help to diversify and strengthen our local industrial base, and for vital Government and European funding to modernise and rebuild our physical, environmental, social and training infrastructure.

The centrepiece of that work, that crusade, will be a new northern development agency. It will sweep away the collection of non-accountable, unelected quangos that pose as the Government's answer to regional needs. The agency will spearhead a new regional renaissance, bring clarity, cohesion and commitment to the need to renew the north of England. It will have responsibility for property assembly and development; and assist start-ups and growing firms. It will help to set up a northern export agency and, above all, help the technological uprating of northern industry.

During the by-election I launched what I called a 10-point economic plan—a blueprint for Cleveland. That will be a programme for action in the run-up to the general election and a checklist for the action that the coming Labour Government will undertake through the support of the northern development agency. That programme will help to revive and regenerate our local economy. It calls for urgent action to pull Langbaurgh and the wider Cleveland area out of the vicious spiral of decline, dereliction and distress. It identifies the essential components, the key demands, of what I intend to call the new deal for Langbaurgh.

First, as a practising research scientist I am only too aware of the need for pure and applied research within our industry and commerce linked to our university academics. We desperately need a technologically advanced economy. We need to set up a new and innovative Teesside technology trust, an instrument to effect proper collaboration between industry, local institutions of higher and further education, regional financial institutions, local councils and training providers and, of course, the European Community. That will provide the structured environment in which local industry can identify its technology and research and development needs, liaise strongly with the public sector and work with local academic institutions.

As I have already said, I welcome the fact that the coming Labour Government will set up, as part of the popular move towards regional government—a move which I whole-heartedly support—a northern regional development agency. I intend to see that firms in my constituency benefit from the work of that agency, which should set tough but realistic targets for local jobs created and for local investment.

I also intend to fight for the creation of a one-stop shop for local industry so as to stop the bureaucracy and confusion of five different Government Departments all attempting to help start-ups or small and expanding businesses. This office would work with local councils, local enterprise agencies and a democratised enterprise council to offer a direct business advice service. Crucially, I want to see the launch of an emergency jobs and training package for my unemployed constituents. That package could include direct job experience—training and job seeking opportunities provided under one roof.

As those who are close to me and those who witnessed the by-election campaign know, I have always argued that individual opportunity and the economic success of one area are linked. Our economic destiny—nationally as well as locally—will be largely determined by the skills and talents of local people. We need to create a training scheme for local people and local industry. It is not enough to try to force local people and industry to conform to a remote central training plan devised and monitored by distant civil servants or by the shadowy private offices and right-wing think tanks servicing the employment Ministers. But that by itself is not enough. We need to see that all local people are able fully to participate in the local labour market. There must be a level playing field so that all people can exercise their talents and ability.

Problems of disability, special needs or the availability of child care facilities should not needlessly deny someone the chance of competing equally in the jobs market. I intend during the coming weeks—as a matter of urgency —to begin discussions with Cleveland local education authority and the local voluntary sector to formulate proposals for a properly funded and wide ranging child care strategy for Cleveland.

The issue of industrial pollution figured prominently in the by-election campaign. Environmental awareness is now a key feature of everyday life in Cleveland. Local industry, which is often unjustly attacked, is trying hard to improve its record on pollution and environmental care. It has got little or no help from the Government in undertaking this responsibility. As a trained scientist, I am

well aware of the scale of the problem and of the means and resources needed to tackle it. I want to promote a new Cleveland-wide programme of applied research into new pollution control, waste minimisation and recycling measures and technologies that will serve to make the county of Cleveland and its industry an internationally recognised centre of excellence in the nation's and the industrial world's battle for a cleaner, greener and more sustainable environment.

Langbaurgh, Cleveland and the wider northern region realise—perhaps more than the Government—that we are living in a world where new trading partners and new markets are developing at a headlong pace. The advent of the single European market and the implications of the Maastricht summit will affect us all, and none more so than those who, if nothing is done, could be consigned to the periphery of what may well prove to be the most important global trading bloc of the 21st century. By contrast, the Government seem interested only in placating or fooling as many of their Back Benchers as possible for as much time as possible over the full implications of an issue which cannot go away, however much the Government might wish otherwise. We recognise the importance of our new European home, even if the Government do not, and I shall continue to press for more investment to ensure the maintenance of Langbaurgh's essential trade with Europe and to see that the links to the channel tunnel, our local ports and our local Teesside airport are as well resourced as those of our competitors on the European mainland.

Finally, and most importantly, we need a totally new regional policy. But this cannot be just a faded imitation of the regional policies of past Governments—Labour or Tory. The problems are greater and the challenges more pressing. Langbaurgh, Cleveland and the northern region have suffered draconian cuts in regional assistance and regional funding since 1979. Regional assistance for the counties of Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Cumbria and Tyne and Wear has been progressively cut by almost two thirds, a drop of about £3·4 million between 1979 and 1987. In the same period the region has experienced the biggest decline in manufacturing investment of any area in the United Kingdom—a decline of some 42 per cent. Under this Government, this gloomy catalogue of disaster, depression and decline is continuing. Figures from the jobcentres in Cleveland clearly show that there has been a drop of some 27 per cent. in registered vacancies since this time last year, and that the pattern shows no sign of abating.

I know that Conservative Members would love me to speak about Cleveland county council. Above all, we desperately need to create sources of regionally-based finance capital, the cash that is needed if firms are to expand, start up or carry out technological uprating. Some far-sighted Labour local authorities in the region are already making great strides towards this goal. In particular, I congratulate Cleveland county council on its imagination and daring in setting up a locally based and locally run £5 million venture capital fund. That is a valuable weapon in the fight to revive Cleveland's economy. Such an initiative will be closely partnered and needs to work closely with my proposed northern development agency and the new national investment bank which will be set up by the next Labour Government, and which will play a key role in areas such as Langbaurgh in the mobilisation of private capital for publicly-led long-term investment projects to improve, enhance and uprate the infrastructure needed to sustain the economic growth for which my constituency is crying out.

I want to stress again, so as graphically to underline the point, that Labour's victory at Langbaurgh has shown that the country wants change, is crying out for change, and is determined, at the polls next spring, to force radical change. In a famous debate in the House in 1940, a leading member of the then Labour Front-Bench team, Arthur Greenwood, was begged to "speak for England"—an intervention that led to a change in Government. Over a half a century later, the people of Langbaurgh have spoken for England and their voice is finding an echo throughout the land. I both hope and believe that that voice will have the same result.

6 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I am sure that I speak for the House when I say how much we appreciated the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Dr. Kumar). I am sure that the House will congratulate him on the excellent way that he delivered it, and on his courtesy, clear speaking and the interesting things that he had to say. Nobody yet knows whether his stay in the House will be long or short but, whichever it is, I hope that he will be happy and have an enjoyable and successful time here.

We appreciated the hon. Gentleman's references to our late colleague, Mr. Richard Holt. He is much missed on these Benches and throughout the House, and it was good of the hon. Gentleman to pay tribute to him—we shall not forget it.

I know the hon. Gentleman's constituency fairly well. It is a constituency of many contrasts. It is possible that, when the hon. Gentleman next speaks, he will find that the House does not agree with everything he says, especially if he repeats his last few remarks. However, tonight we shall not disagree with anything he said, at least not in public. I offer him many congratulations.

I shall try to be brief, because many of my hon. Friends also wish to speak. I start by declaring an interest, as trustee of a charitable housing association. It is building a project in the constituency of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh, but I have not yet visited it.

I do not often speak in housing debates. The last time I did so was in 1973, when I moved the Second Reading of a housing Bill, which the Labour Government took over and which became the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act 1974. I mention this because, the more I have listened to the debate, the more it has become clear that the old controversial arguments have not changed.

Furthermore, it is also clear that, when both sides of the House agree on housing policy, we make progress, but when they cannot, we do not. In the 1960s and 1970s—I give credit to the Labour party for this—the improvement of older housing became a great bipartisan cause. In the 1970s, we all supported the voluntary housing movement, which the Bill that I introduced and the Act from the Labour Government did a great deal to support. All this shows that, when we agree, we have successes, and when we disagree, we have disasters.

I do not wish to be controversial tonight, particularly as we do not have much time, but as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) criticised the Conservative Government for bringing about the decline in the private

[Mr. Paul Channon]

rent sector, I should point out that the decline has gone on for a very long time. The Labour party's attitude towards rent control and the privately controlled sector, which has been maintained for a long time, has been largely responsible for the decline.

As I understand it—no doubt the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), who is to reply for the Opposition, will correct me if I am wrong—there is a suggestion of confiscation if private tenants are to have the right to buy. Perhaps he will tell us exactly what the Labour party's policy is.

I very much welcome—indeed, I wish I had the chance to do this myself—the way that my hon. Friend the Minister has boosted the housing association movement. The number of houses in this sector has risen from 200 to about 500,000. I am certain that that will increase still further. I believe it to be a very important factor in the medium-term housing situation. I am sure that, after the next general election, there will be many more housing action trusts, and many more local authorities will want to transfer their properties to housing associations.

There will also be a welcome increase in the amount of housing being built by the housing association movement. My right hon. Friends in the Department have managed to double the budget from just over £1 billion in 1991 to £2 billion in 1994-95, and 120,000 voluntary housing association houses will be built over the next three years. That is a great step forward, and I believe that it is the way forward for housing in the subsidised sector.

I welcome the three-year approach, which will allow housing associations to plan their programmes properly. It was ridiculous that, in the past, a housing association would not know with any certainty what approvals it would get or how much money it would have beyond the end of the year. It is now much more likely to be rationally organised, and I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on that.

I also congratulate them on their approach to getting private finance. I am sure that we should get value for money in this sector so as to ensure that every penny of public money is spent in the best way to provide more housing for the people who so desperately need it. My hon. Friend the Minister has also launched a study recently into ways to attract yet more private finance into the housing association movement. I hope that he will be able to tell us how long the study will take and how he sees the way forward.

Could not the Housing Corporation, which has large funds, do more? Is there no way, without breaking the public expenditure rules, to allow the Housing Corporation to invest or to go into partnership with a bank or the Housing Finance Corporation or a similar organisation? That would increase the amount of money available to be lent to housing associations, and lead to an even larger housing programme. Perhaps the answer is a mixture of public and private money—I do not know. Such a body might be able to lend at a better commercial rate, which would mean that houses would be cheaper and rents lower. I hope that the Minister's inquiry will look at that and other similar proposals.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to be careful about one point. It is true that costs are going down and that it is therefore reasonable to make a change in the total cost indicators. However, when housing associations plan a big housing scheme, they plan a long way ahead. They have to make some assumptions about future interest rates, and when they make proposals, they base them on such assumptions. If there are then frequent changes in the cost indicators and the grant is reduced, that is threatening for housing associations. I ask not that it should not be done but that it should be done infrequently, and that more notice should be given. That would mean more stability and confidence in the housing association movement.

Will my hon. Friend look at the way in which homeless figures are recorded? Housing associations are probably doing much more to help the homeless than is shown in the figures. For example, I know of a case where a housing association bought a block of flats from some developers and allowed the developers to nominate to those flats. That vacated other flats that the developers had into which homeless people went. That did not show up as a single gain for the homeless in the statistics. There are many similar ingenious schemes around, but they are not sufficiently apparent to show how the housing association movement is helping to alleviate homelessness.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith concentrated on mortgage repossessions. We have all heard of terrible cases in our constituencies. Anything that can be done is good, but we can do even more with housing associations. I was glad to hear what he said about the initiative on empty properties. Can we not have an even more active policy so that housing associations know all the practices among other housing associations?

For example, if a housing association can buy a house from someone who has fallen in arrears with his mortgage, it should try to keep that family living there if that is possible. The hon. Member for Hammersmith criticised the Government's scheme, and I agree that it is a disaster if people have to be moved from repossessed properties into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. If a way can be found to keep them in their property, perhaps with a housing association managing it or acting as agent for the local authority, or encouraging the shared ownership about which my hon. Friend spoke, that would be much better. To do that, we need to study the best practice of housing associations. We need some imaginative scheme to help people who fall into arrears but who have not fallen into complete financial chaos.

I strongly support the Government in their desire that the voluntary housing movement should be the main provider of social subsidised housing. The expansion of the voluntary housing movement is having an excellent effect on local authorities. Local authorities which face the prospect of losing their housing stock to a housing action trust will pay much more attention to their tenants than used to be the case.

When the housing association movement grows and many more houses are transferred to it, as will probably happen, I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to keep an eye on it. There is no point in a transfer for the sake of it. The object of a transfer is to give the tenants a better deal. The day may come, although not for some time, when large housing associations have to be split up to prevent them from becoming unwieldy local authorities in their own right. The process of reform will have to be kept continually under review.

No housing association has a large enough stock to be in such a situation now, but if they are not good enough and if they become impersonal and do not give the tenants

the service they should, they should be subject to the same criticism as local authorities in a similar position. The point is to provide a better service and a greater opportunity to provide houses using public and private money to the best advantage.

There are many other topics that I should have liked to talk about. The policies that my hon. Friend and his predecessors have pursued during the past few years, particularly last year—the new form of tenure, the new partnership, the maximum value for money, the mixture of public and private funds and the new forms of landlord—offer great hope.

As we all know, there is at present a short-term difficulty. My hon. Friend is right to say that a reduction in interest rates would be the best news for those in difficulty with their mortgages, but in the medium term, my hon. Friends have laid a good foundation for British housing. I commend them, and I shall vote with enthusiasm for the amendment.

6.11 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): After 12 years of office, the Government have little to be proud of when it comes to housing. They have presided over record levels of homelessness, record rent levels and record levels of house repossessions. The hallmark of any civilised society is its ability to house its citizens properly. People have a fundamental right to decent affordable housing, a right that the Government attempted to capitalise on with their ideology of a property-owning democracy. The right-to-buy policy was the Government's flagship in 1980, but because it was implemented as part and parcel of Conservative mania to reduce public spending and to restrict the powers of local government, it has contributed to the present scandalous homeless and housing crisis which is growing all the time.

Shelter's most recent report put the number of homeless people at 350,000. Some estimates are set even higher, at 500,000. As many as 8,000 people sleep rough every night. Age Concern believes that 30 per cent. of those people are over 50 years of age, many of them with disabilities. But the number of disabled persons who are homeless and on our streets are not just among the elderly. The November issue of *Disability Now* quotes a new survey in Nottingham carried out among 50 homeless people between the ages of 16 and 25, which found that the majority had disabilities.

How the Government can come to the House today and call that a success is beyond belief. It is a disgrace. We are a supposedly civilised society approaching the 21st century, we have wonderful technology and great expertise, we play our part on the world stage—yet we fail miserably when it comes to housing our people.

The previous Prime Minister held up a dream of home ownership. The Government raised expectations but failed to deliver to thousands of people. Not only that, they also took away the choice of how people housed themselves. The right to choose figured prominently in all the Government's rhetoric, but when policies were implemented, choice was eliminated for most people.

The Government's housing policy was aimed at home ownership, to the detriment of the provision of affordable housing to rent. Many people looking for somewhere to live had little choice but to buy, often with 100 per cent. mortgages. For others, the opportunity was a dream come true. They believed the rhetoric and entered the property market. I accept that many of those people have never looked back, but thousands of others have.

Mortgage repossessions have reached record proportions throughout the country. As many as 100,000 to 120,000 houses will have been repossessed by the end of the year. With the current level of people in arrears running at 750,000, of which 162,000 are more than six months in arrears, that figure is set to go even higher next year.

The situation could be made worse if and when the housing market picks up because at the moment some building societies are holding back from repossessing because of falling house values. As soon as they see a turn in the market, they will begin the repossession process, and many more families will be evicted.

The Government are in for a nasty shock. Come the general election, they may find themselves evicted from the House, but that eviction will be the result of their own actions, unlike the fate of many of the homeless and those who have had their homes repossessed.

The Government have mismanaged the economy, introduced high interest rates, implemented housing policies but neglected the need for social housing and presided over the boom and bust cycle which has contributed to the depressed housing market. In recent weeks, the Government have tried to talk up the economy, but they have failed to convince anybody that recovery is around the corner.

It is not difficult to see why the Government have failed when industries such as the construction industry are on their knees. As Sir Clifford Chetwood, chairman of Wimpey, was reported as saying in *The Guardian* on 26 November, the construction industry is in "shocking crisis", with no prospect of a return to growth until 1993. He has forecast 250,000 job losses by next summer, with as many as 5,000 firms going to the wall before the end of this year. He says that the country is on the brink of a housing crisis with a shortfall of 1 million homes.

Some of us have been only too aware for a long time that housing in Britain was in crisis. Most of us have only to look around to see the homeless on our streets or to visit some of the homeless organisations such as the Simon community, which I have visited twice. There are many in that community who are sleeping rough. I expected there to be 40 in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but when I went, there were 260 people. Most of them have jobs; none of them have homes because they cannot afford the three months' rent.

With the construction industry depressed, with some building societies and mortgage lenders in trouble and with unemployment continuing to rise, the housing market is set to continue to fall, and Britain's economic recovery will be further delayed. The Government must take the initiative and look to ways to reduce repossessions and the number of homeless and to provide more homes for rent.

In the short term, much can be done which will have some immediate effect. The recently announced scheme to allow housing associations to take over repossessed homes to house homeless families for a year is a beginning, but if that is to be the only scheme, it is somewhat misguided. There is not much sense in turfing one family out into the cold in order to house another which, on present trends, will be homeless again within a year unless there is some guarantee of permanent housing.

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

The Government must use their initiative and power to prevent repossessions in the first place. They must introduce sensible mortgage rescue schemes. The transfer of mortgages to shared ownership schemes with local authorities and housing associations is one such scheme which will work. Local authorities already have the power to set up mortgage rescue schemes with housing associations, but the Government should find ways to encourage the extension of such schemes.

Mortgage lenders must take some of the blame for the current repossession crisis. I was pleased that the Minister mentioned that. Far too often in the past, lenders have been, if not irresponsible, over-enthusiastic. I do not want a return to the days when it was virtually impossible to obtain a mortgage, but I feel that lenders should be more responsible. Perhaps they will be: there is nothing like a nasty case of burnt fingers to restrict lending.

Mortgage-to-rent schemes should also be encouraged, since they would benefit lenders as well as families in arrears. Rather than selling at auction, possibly at a loss, lenders could hold on to properties that might appreciate in value, while continuing to receive a regular income from those properties. Tenancies could be short or long term, and, if necessary, housing benefit could be provided to make the rent affordable. If such schemes are to appeal to building societies, they may have to be administered by local authorities or other housing agencies. A shared-ownership scheme would also benefit both lenders and families in arrears.

Another possibility is a mortgage-to-rent scheme with the option to buy back. Regardless of which scheme is introduced, however, Liberal Democrats recognise that the lenders would need some assistance. We suggest that the portion of income support that is allocated for mortgage repayments be paid to them directly.

Other problems also need attention urgently. The Government must tackle homelessness in general. To help young single people, we advocate reform of the social security system, enabling income support to be paid in advance and restoring the full rate of income support to the under-25s. Family credit entitlement should be adjusted to reflect liability for mortgage interest payments.

The Government should also investigate the possibility of a housing benefit allocation that takes into account mortgage interest payments. I understand that reducing mortgage tax relief from 25 per cent. to 23·5 per cent. would release £400 million—the estimated cost of paying housing benefit for mortgage interest payments. That information is contained in a report by the Council of Mortgage Lenders entitled "Time for Mortgage Benefits", which is due to be published later this week. Perhaps the Minister will look at it.

The lifting of the restrictions on capital receipts from the sale of council houses would provide an immediate injection of cash for the housing market. It would provide more homes, and it would also create jobs. Our party's programme would increase the percentage of council house and land sale receipts that can be spent by local authorities from 25 per cent. to 75 per cent. when the money is to be spent on repairs and renovation.

The Government's housing policy has led to many untenable situations. Let me give an example of the ridiculous state of housing finance and the false economies that have been made. Because of the lack of affordable housing to rent, and the lack of funds to bring poor housing up to standard, many local authorities have to resort to providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation. According to the Audit Commission figures for 1990, the cost in the first year of such accommodation in London is £15,540; the cost in the first year of building a home to rent is £8,200. Outside the metropolitan districts, the figures are £5,475 and £5,000 respectively. Those figures speak volumes about the absurd way in which the Government run their housing policy.

So far, the Government's response to the housing crisis has been dismal. Palliatives are not enough; we need fundamental change. Unless the Government take action now, the nation's housing needs will continue to increase and the current state of affairs will continue to go downhill.

6.24 pm

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): The debate has been marked by three speeches in particular. First, there was the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Dr. Kumar), which was heard with much appreciation. Then there was the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Housing Finance Bill in 1972: that was the longest Committee stage that we had experienced, and it seemed even longer than it was. I was struck then by the enormous skill and patience with which my right hon. Friend handled the Committee: he provided a model for others. I support his view that progress can best be achieved when there is a measure of agreement between the parties.

As always, we heard a very good speech from my hon. Friend the Minister, who dealt effectively with the somewhat lengthy speech by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). My hon. Friend demonstrated that the Government care a great deal about the problems of people who are having difficulty in making mortgage payments, and that a number of effective actions are being taken. We were pleased to hear that, for real distress is plainly being caused.

There is no doubt that the measures that we took in the 1980s to widen home ownership were completely justified. I do not accept for a moment that the existence of the problems that I have just acknowledged undermines the enormous success and importance of that move. We all know that our policy in that regard will not be reversed by any other political party. However, we also know that housing policy cannot stand still. There are always new problems: we never reach a happy plateau on which there is nothing to worry about. We should be concerned about the difficulty of providing low-cost housing, for instance.

That difficulty is partly due to demographic factors. It is also due to family breakdown, which, sadly, is placing a good deal of pressure on housing, as most of us know from our constituency surgeries. We must tackle that problem. We could gain some useful assistance with overall housing strategy from the excellent report that followed the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry into British housing, which came out in the summer. I should have liked to say more about that, but time is short.

My constituents are likely to experience worse problems over the next year or so. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise that, and will ensure

that our policies can help. The essence of the problem is the drying up of council building, and the lack of housing association building to offset that. Until now, we were doing reasonably well. Our building programme has worked, although there has never been much housing association building for general needs.

I fear that we are going to run into difficulties. Approval for new council building in my area has been ended. There has been a sharp drop from an allocation of more than £3 million in 1985-86 for Aylesbury Vale district council to £367,000 in 1991-92, and that allocation is for improvements, not new building. This year, the waiting list will probably double. The council operates an extremely restrictive policy—it is pretty hard to get on to the waiting list—and the position is set to worsen.

Homelessness increased by about 25 per cent. between 1990 and 1991. Only about 62 housing association units are planned for next year, and, while about 40 shared-ownership units were provided by the council this year, housing associations will provide only about 19 next year. All that will mean some fairly tough problems—not for me, because I shall not be standing in the next election, but for my successor.

Wycombe district council will need, it estimates, about 1,500 units of low-cost housing over the next five years. That is based on need; it is not simply a question of demand. According to present plans, it looks as though housing associations wil provide only 300 of those units. It is likely, therefore, that there will be a serious shortfall in Wycombe district council's housing provision. It has to provide for 700 homeless people this year and it has 200 people in temporary accommodation. What is happening in my constituency cannot possibly be unique. It must be happening elsewhere.

What can we do about it? First, we have to recognise the problems. I am sure that the Minister does recognise them. Secondly, I do not mind whether the problem is tackled by an increase in the amount of private rented accommodation, or by increasing the allocation to housing associations, or even by more cuts in council building. We still need a horses-for-courses policy. The problem must be tackled by one means or another.

The debate has focused primarily on mortgage payments, but I hope that the Minister will bear in mind that in many parts of the country low-cost housing presents real problems. In their amendment to the motion the Government rightly say that housing policy is not about just one issue but about a wide variety of issues. I am confident that the Government will bring forward measures that ensure that low-cost housing can be made available to people who badly need it.

6.31 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): This an Opposition Day. When the Liberal Democrats have a Supply Day I hope that the Chair will take into account the length of the speech of the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn).

The debate has greatly benefited from the fine and comprehensive maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Dr. Kumar). He demonstrated his deep roots in the constituency and his detailed knowledge of the problems that face it, as well as the qualities of the constituency. He demonstrated also the analytical skills which, as a scientist, he brings to the House. He analysed the problems faced by his constituency in the context of the Government's policy. We shall be pleased to listen to my hon. Friend on many occasions in the years to come.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) made a great deal of the recent 4·5 per cent. cut in interest rates. That is very important. However, the Minister failed to recall the fact that it was this Government who sent interest rates into the stratosphere. It is one thing to boast about a reduction in interest rates and the effects that may have had: it is another thing to claim credit for bringing them down, having sent them up into the stratosphere in the first place. Under this Government, average interest rates have been higher than at any time under any Labour Government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made abundantly clear, the Government's record speaks for itself.

The Minister referred to the Labour party's response to housing action trusts. Occasionally, he is somewhat disingenuous when presenting his case, and this was one such occasion. The Minister sat as a Back Bencher all the way through the Committee proceedings on the 1988 Housing Bill.

Sir George Young *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howarth: The Minister intimates that he did not do so, but he certainly took a close interest in the passage of that Bill.

He will be aware that a series of amendments were tabled in that Committee, on Report and in the other place by my hon. Friends and me. The amendments would have made housing action trusts more open, in that they would have been the subject of a genuine ballot of the tenants and would have provided tenants with the option to revert to local authority control. The Government rejected all those amendments. We are able to say now that in certain circumstances, where there is local support, we are prepared to accept housing action trusts, because the amendments that we tabled at the time but which were rejected were ultimately accepted by the Government.

All parts of the House will accept as constructive many of the comments made by the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). What I have just said, however, about housing action trusts undermines the right hon. Gentleman's point. The right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) also made a fairly constructive and in some respects progressive speech. I refer him to the motion, in which he will find much more to agree with than he will find in the Government's amendment.

The genesis of the housing crisis was during the former reign of the Secretary of State for the Environment, accompanied by the hon. Member for Acton, who, in his first incarnation as a Minister with responsibility for housing, was a member of the terrible duo that is now reinflicting itself on housing policy.

The housing problems that we now face were foreshadowed by the Opposition. We warned the Government that they would eventually have to be dealt with. I refer the House to the Committee proceedings on the 1980 Housing Bill, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said:

"The Secretary of State"—

the same Secretary of State as we have now—

"who has the effrontery to talk about enough new house building to meet demand, is certain to leave office with the unenviable record of having not only presided over but

[Mr. Howarth]

deliberately brought about the worst housing programme since the war."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1980; Vol. 976, c. 1559.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith has already made it clear that that prediction has come true.

Mr. Hood: Will my hon. Friend comment on the visit of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland to London yesterday, when he spoke at Dover house in Whitehall and reminded the Secretary of State for Scotland that 25 per cent. of all the homeless people sleeping rough in London come from Scotland? Is not the real cause of people sleeping rough the fact that we are not providing homes for them in their own part of the country?

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Acton announced that about 1,800 places had been provided, as a direct result of Government initiatives, for people who otherwise would be sleeping rough. According to the Government's statistics, that means that between 7,000 and 8,000 people are still sleeping rough every night of the week. Those statistics were given to a Select Committee last year by the permanent secretary to the Department of the Environment. Either they have gone down, or they have stayed the same. It means that about 5,000 or 6,000 people are sleeping on the streets of London and elsewhere. The Government are complacent and smug. They have acted too late and have not done enough.

Sir George Young *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I shall not give way to the Minister, not because I am being discourteous but because he refused to give way earlier and took up over 30 minutes of the debate.

The genesis of the problem is the Government's policy of the early 1980s. Nothing illustrates more clearly the Government's appeals for people to become owner-occupiers than the words of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) at the October 1986 Conservative party conference:

"The great political reform of the last century was to enable more and more people to have a vote. Now, the great Tory reform of this century is to enable more and more people to own property."

Those words are unwelcome to all those facing homelessness and repossession, who in good faith became owner-occupiers and now find themselves unable to cope with their commitments because of the recent high interest rates.

Let us not collude with any pretence that the repossession problem has not been created by the Government's relentless promotion of owner-occupation as the only housing solution. It is worth pointing out that by reducing the supply of rented accommodation, across all types of tenure, the Government have closed off many escape routes that might otherwise have been available.

The facts of the problem are a stark and sorry saga. About 85,000 repossessions are officially acknowledged and, by the end of the year, it is likely to be 100,000 or even 120,000. About 750,000 owner-occupiers are in arrears and are at risk of having their property repossessed at some time in the future if they cannot resolve their problems.

What is the Minister's response? One response is that of smug complacency. On "World in Action" earlier this week, the Minister said that most lenders are offering a range of options. He enlightened the House on those options today. Does he suppose that those 85,000 people who have already had their homes repossessed were aware of the options but simply ignored them and let themselves be put out into the street? Of course they were not aware of them and the Government have done nothing to make them aware of them.

The Government's recent announcement—another panic public relations exercise with no real substance—underlines their inadequate response. First, homes will be repossessed by building societies. Secondly, the occupants will have either to fend for themselves or to fall back on the local authorities for temporary accommodation. After being repossessed by a building society or bank, their home will, through a housing association, be rented to another family who have had their home repossessed. What nonsense. It is musical houses—when the music stops, everybody changes house. It does not have the fun of musical chairs, because the game involves thousands of human tragedies.

What is the politics of this? We should look at the November-December issue of *Roof*, in which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) put his view succinctly:

"I have never seen such personal misery in all of my 25 years as a Member of Parliament."

Perhaps more interesting is a source quoted as a senior Conservative whip—unnamed:

"It's now clear the balance has to be redressed between home ownership and renting. There's also a continuing need for social housing which we recognise—we're not daft".

I take issue with the latter part of his remarks.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) is quoted in the same publication:

"If people borrow more than they ought to, they will have to bloody well learn."

There is plenty of sympathy there.

Perhaps we should take the word of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope):

"I haven't had a single letter on the subject. Unless I see figures which suggest otherwise, I won't believe that repossession leads to homelessness."

Those are the views of Conservative Back Benchers. They are uncharitable, unkind and disingenuous, particularly those who claim that they did not know what was happening. Several of those hon. Members are sitting on majorities of fewer than 2,000 or 5,000, and the electorate will take their revenge at the next general election.

The figures for housing starts across all sections have been quoted. It is sufficient to say that new build in the private rented sector, local authorities and housing associations is on the decline. Inevitably, the gap between the supply of housing and the number of people who need it will grow and grow. The contrast is stark between what the Government are doing and the programme for a mortgage rescue package outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith.

Within days of taking office, a Labour Government will call in all the interested parties—local authorities, housing associations, building societies, banks and the agencies that deal with homelessness. We shall put together a crash homelessness package and mortgage rescue package to deal with the homelessness caused by the Government's years of inactivity. The Secretary of State and his Ministers have proved time and again during their two terms of office in the Department that they are unfit to deal with

housing. Only a Labour Government will deal with it, and we look forward to the day—it will be soon—when we have an opportunity to do so. I urge the House to support the motion.

6.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): This has been a useful and timely debate, but not for the reasons that the Opposition intended. It has demonstrated beyond any doubt that the new thinking and well-informed contributions come from Conservative Members, while from the Opposition we hear nothing but bluster and ignorance.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Dr. Kumar) on his thoughtful maiden speech. We look forward to further contributions from him. I was interested in what he had to say. In Middlesbrough, not far from his constituency, was one of the winners of this year's city challenge initiative, with a bid that included a large housing element. The bid will tackle many of the objectives to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I hope that, as one of the 57 urban programme authorities, Langbaurgh will take the opportunity of bidding in the city challenge initiative next year, when it may receive extra funds from central Government to deal with the issues concerning the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh's reference to his predecessor, Richard Holt, was much appreciated by Conservative Members. I am sorry that Mr. Speaker was not here to listen to that reference, since I know that Richard Holt was a friendly adversary of Mr. Speaker.

There have been some first-class speeches during this short debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), a former Minister responsible for housing, showed that he has lost none of his grasp and expertise on the subject. We welcome the support that he expressed for housing associations. He was right to stress the importance of maximising the contribution that private funds can make to supplement the contribution from the taxpayers. Last year over £800 million was lent from the private sector to housing associations, and this year over £400 million is to be lent from the same source. My hon. Friend the Minister has put in hand a study of ways in which it may be possible to increase the flow of private finance. We hope to have the results of that study early next year.

I shall take note of my right hon. Friend's suggestion about total cost indicators and the frequency with which they are adjusted. I share his view about the desirability of promoting best practice among housing associations and others to minimise the rate of repossession.

In painful contrast to my right hon. Friend's speech, the House heard an ignorant and rather sour contribution from the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn). The less that is said about it the better.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) made an eloquent plea about the shortage of affordable housing. The Government are addressing the matter urgently. We have doubled the funding of the housing association movement. I hope that my right hon. Friend's constituency and district council will receive a proper share.

I should like to make two further points to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury, one of which is relevant to all rural areas. Once a needs study has been conducted in a small rural village settlement, the exceptions policy allows a local authority to give permission for development on land that may have been obtained at nil cost or at a low cost that does not reflect its development value. That is one way of achieving a supply of low-cost housing in rural areas.

Using the same philosophy, in May we published circular 791, which encourages local authorities to negotiate with private developers for low-cost housing to be included in new housing schemes. I want local authorities to take advantage of that huge and exciting new opportunity. There is now a chance for them to play a proper enabling role, bringing together housing and planning departments to meet local housing need.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), who attempted to intervene earlier in the debate, made an important point about the Housing Corporation's distribution of funds to housing associations. I shall write to him about that.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Yeo: No, I do not have time.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) was off the mark in his statistics on rough sleepers. The census showed that there were 1,300 rough sleepers in London and 1,400 elsewhere, making a total of 2,700. The figures that are thrown around of thousands of rough sleepers are without foundation. I am glad to reiterate what my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said: there will be 1,800 places in permanent accommodation for people who have been sleeping rough in London, in addition to 1,000 hostel places.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Yeo: No, I do not have time.

The hon. Members for Knowsley, North and for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned mortgage repossessions, but they overlooked the fact that the Department of Social Security pays £500 million of income support a year exclusively to meet the mortgage interest commitments of income support claimants. That is a huge programme, which is likely to increase this year, and its effect is precisely to achieve the objective that we all share—to prevent repossessions.

The Opposition remain addicted to the solutions of the 1960s, regardless of their failure then and their irrelevance now. Their approach to the problem, and to almost every other problem, is to mouth carefully crafted phrases that are selected for their ambiguity. The purpose is to convey the message to the audience that Labour would spend more money on this or that group, but without giving a firm commitment.

That blatant attempt to deceive his clients is unworthy of a former probation officer such as the hon. Member for Hammersmith. It is a new form of fraudulent misrepresentation. It can usually be heard in the House when the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is absent. If she were here, she might have to confirm that her priorities are confined to social security issues. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Hammersmith is able to say that Labour would spend that £100 million.

Mr. Soley *indicated assent.*

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman is confirming that he would spend that. I am glad. I wonder how near the bottom of Labour's ever-lengthening list of spending promises that pledge is.

Mr. Soley: I have told the House a number of times, but I shall tell the Minister again, that we would save £50 million on the mortgage repossession bed-and-breakfast costs in London alone.

Mr. Yeo: That is certainly helpful clarification. I think that what the hon. Member is trying to say is that there would not be any new money.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith included 16 priorities in the document that he published this year, all of which were uncosted and no order of preference was given. The mortgage rescue scheme was one of the priorities. I should like to quote from another old Labour favourite:

"the lifting of constraints on direct labour organisations".

I am not surprised that the hon. Member forgot to mention that, as today the newspapers have reported the illegal award of contracts to direct labour organisations by Lambeth borough council. That pledge will fill many tenants with absolute dread. I imagine that it was included at the request of the hon. Gentleman's cronies in the trades union movement. At least we can understand why he has not tried to put a price on it.

Either way, Labour's version of the mortgage rescue scheme seems to set some new benchmark in cost-effectiveness. It is startling, even by Labour's standards. For £100 million, whether it is new taxpayers' money or not, not a single new unit of housing is added to existing stock. For £100 million, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) pointed out, only a tiny fraction of the families who are facing repossession would receive any help. It is not the wasteful use of taxpayers' money that characterises it as a Labour proposal but the typically dominant role that the hon. Member for Hammersmith foresees for local authorities.

That is the real hallmark. Whatever question one asks on housing policy, Labour's answer is always the same: give the local authorities more cash and, with any luck, they will use it to buy some more private sector homes. It is straight back to the council monopoly landlord: take away tenants' choice, drive out owner-occupiers and let the council take over. In Liverpool, that system left almost one council property in 10 empty. That system left almost a third of the rent in Lambeth uncollected, with a similar proportion in Southwark. More than £40 million should have been taken from tenants to repair and improve stock. Labour's vision of the future is the sink estates and unwanted tower blocks.

This afternoon, Labour has tried to portray the huge expansion of owner-occupation in the past 12 years as some kind of disaster. Seven million first-time buyers since 1979 could tell Labour that they know that it is not a disaster. One and a quarter million former local authority tenants who exercised their right to buy could tell Labour that it is not a disaster. The 49 out of every 50 mortgage payers who are not in arrears or facing repossession could tell Labour that it is not a disaster. All those people know that the growth of owner-occupation has been one of the huge success stories of the 1980s.

Just as we extended tenants' rights in the 1980s in the teeth of Labour party hostility, so we shall do the same in the 1990s. Whether it is tenant-led housing action trusts, rents to mortgage or large-scale voluntary transfers, tenants are enjoying new freedoms to choose their future —who their landlord is, how their estate is run and what form of tenure they should have. Just as Labour fought tooth and nail against the right to buy, so it rubbishes HATs, rent-to-mortgage schemes and large-scale voluntary transfers.

In the end, Labour saw the light of day and did a U-turn on the right to buy. Who knows, after 12 more years of glorious Tory government it may be forced, by popular support for those Tory initiatives, to do U-turns on them, too.

The extent of the Government's commitment can be seen in the huge resources that are being devoted to housing—not just the £7·8 billion of Department of the Environment spending but another £7·8 billion of tax relief to home buyers. That has increased two and a half times in real terms since 1979. Over the same period, spending on housing benefit has doubled in real terms to £4·6 billion. That is £17 billion of taxpayers' money in the form of cash and tax reliefs, in addition to the £1 billion of private sector lending that I have already referred to.

The Government have a multi-faceted approach to housing policy. We are promoting home ownership through the right to buy, rents to mortgages and shared ownership for families that cannot afford to buy outright. We are promoting the construction of more affordable homes under circular 791, which is opening up new horizons.

We are promoting a variety of rented properties in the private sector through the enormous growth in shared shorthold tenancies made possible by the Housing Act 1988, a growth which is now taking place at a faster rate than the decline in the old secure tenancies as they disappear. We are also promoting a range of other initiatives to bring back the landlord, such as the £25 million available for bringing back into use flats over shops.

On the local authority front, through the process of competitive housing investment programme allocations we are ensuring that, for the first time, the taxpayers' resources will go where they are most likely to be well spent. That is alongside a hugely expanded estate action programme and two housing action trusts which are now getting under way. That is all in addition to the extensive initiatives outlined by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning in response to questions about repossessions.

The contrast between the two approaches is perfectly clear. Labour has a litany of uncosted promises, fraudulently financed. It is as careless with words as it is with money. Underlying its approach is a strong socialist theme—the municipalisation of private property, the crackdown on owner-occupiers and the removal of tenants' rights. We know what Labour's housing policy means in action. Unfortunately, we can see it in Lambeth, in Southwark, in Hackney and in Liverpool. It is the same old story—neglect the tenants, waste the money, run down the stock and outlaw the private sector.

The Conservative philosophy is that of a pluralist approach—higher spending targeted to get even better value for money, the private landlord recreated, home owners helped more than ever before, tenants given real freedom of choice and, above all, an end to the old local

authority monopoly. I commend the amendment to the House and urge the House to reject the Opposition's motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 224, Noes 315.

Division No. 19] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry.
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick

Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the fact that interest rates have been set at a level within the European Exchange Rate Mechanism which has succeeded in substantially reducing inflation; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the continued success of its policies to put a decent home within reach of every family, by promoting home occupation, by the success of the Right to Buy, by securing greater private sector investment, by promoting diversification of tenure and tenant involvement, by directing public expenditure so as to secure more effective use of resources and improved performance from housing authorities and by increasing the budget of the Housing Corporation by 94 per cent. over three years.

Sport

[Relevant document: fourth report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1990-91 (HC 155), on sport in schools.]

7.15 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its concern at the effects of the policies of Her Majesty's Government on the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport and recreation in this country; deplores the fact that the Minister's review initiated four years ago into the organisation and financing of sport has still not reported; regrets the serious decline of school sport and the proper supply of physical education teachers which should be seen as the foundation upon which all United Kingdom sport is established; condemns the appalling effects of Government policies and financing which have seriously damaged sports services provided by local authorities and educational authorities, undermining the right of all children to learn to swim, and of all citizens to enjoy their chosen leisure pursuits; condemns the lack of leadership provided by the Government for the development of United Kingdom sport and the promotion of major international sports events such as the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and world events; and endorses the policies set out in the Labour party's 'Charter for Sport'.

This debate is long overdue. The Government are so ashamed of their record on sport that in the 12 years during which they have held office they have never initiated a debate on sport, unless we count debates on tragedies such as Bradford and Hillsborough and such phoney solutions as the Football Spectators Act 1989, which is now totally discredited along with the Minister who foisted it on the nation.

We are debating the motion because British sport is suffering from the effects of 12 years of neglect. The sports provision by local government—the main provider of facilities for the millions of our people who simply enjoy the pleasure of sport—has been decimated by the Government's onslaught. Sport in schools has been devastated. Playing fields desperately needed by the whole community have been sold off, developed and lost for ever. Physical education colleges have been closed and there is a shortage of qualified teachers. There are hardly any qualified physical education teachers in primary schools and the place for physical education in the school curriculum is wholly inadequate. As we warned, privatisation has barred from sports halls and swimming baths the very people whom we should be attracting into them. In sport, privatisation is a total failure.

In professional sport, football has benefited from the Football Trust, which was created by Labour, although the Government, to their credit, extended support based on the principles that we had established. The Government have done nothing for cricket, hockey, athletics, rugby league, rugby union and other principal spectator sports.

There has been no leadership in international sport. How could there be with five Ministers in 12 years? There was no help for the Commonwealth games in Edinburgh, no help for the Sheffield world student games and no help for the Birmingham or Manchester Olympic bids. The verdict of British sport on the Government's record will be that it is helpless and hopeless.

As the general election draws near, a new hope and a new realism is available for sport and we set it all out in Labour's "Charter for Sport", which the motion endorses. Already it has been welcomed on all sides. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that other people have a copy of the charter. As a result, we shall no doubt have a more educated contribution from the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). The charter was drawn up after consultation with sport and it expresses the aspirations of sport. I present it to the House with every confidence that it meets the needs of sport.

In contrast to Labour's programme, we have the shameful dithering and procrastination of Tory Ministers. In November 1987, four years ago, the previous Minister announced his review of the organisational and financial arrangements of United Kingdom sport. He made no progress over the next three years. He has disappeared through the turnstile of government marked "exit" and, as befits a man who spent so much time getting nowhere, he has now been sent to the Department of Energy.

The present Minister has held office for 12 years—*[Interruption.]* I mean 12 months, but it seems like 12 years. There is still no reorganisation in sight, and there is still no report for sport or for Parliament to debate. However, the Minister has not been entirely idle. He has developed a well-deserved reputation as sport's leading chauvinist—and that is saying something. In the week in which the Prime Minister announced his new policy, "Charter 2000", the Minister rejected the recommendation of the Sports Council that he appoint two of the most able women in sport, recreation and education to be chairmen of regional sports councils—Professor Margaret Talbot for Yorkshire and Humberside and Liz Murdock for London and the south-east. I hope that, as a result of the debate, the Prime Minister gets to hear about that. No doubt the Minister will plead that he is following Cabinet precedent—"No women here, although we are in favour of the principle."

I hear that the Minister has decided not to have any more formal meetings with the regional chairmen. He will meet them over dinner instead. They feel insulted.

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Robert Atkins) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howell: I have a letter to that effect—the Minister had better investigate. No doubt he believes that the intellectual exercise involved in meeting the regional chairmen will be too strenuous for him to undertake. That is a disgraceful way to treat the regions.

Let us consider the results of the Minister's combat with the Treasury to obtain funds for sport—the subject of the Government's amendment. The amendment is fascinating, in that it claims credit for all the money put into sport by everyone else except the Government. That is extraordinary.

In the autumn statement sports funding was increased by 4·4 per cent.—from £46·7 million to £48·7 million. That is the fourth consecutive standstill budget. The Arts Council received a 14·2 per cent. increase—from £561 million to £610 million. No wonder the chairman of the Sports Council described his grant as a kick in the teeth. No one begrudges our friends in the arts a penny of their grant—they need and deserve it all—but it tells us everything about the Government's attitude to sport.

I have always believed that in essence sport is a cultural pursuit. It provides the occasions on which hundreds of thousands of people experience a sense of pure delight through their own achievements on the sports field or through the superb sporting performance of gifted players.

[Mr. Howell]

The Government have no such insight; they allow sport to languish and even to disintegrate, leaving millions of young people to their own devices. Instead of harnessing sport as a positive force for good in the lives of millions of young people, the Government offer the economics of the marketplace and all the evils of boredom and frustration which affect our society so disastrously. On the "Today" programme only yesterday morning, the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), contemptuously derided local government for spending money on leisure and sport.

The appearance of a succession of Cabinet Ministers, led by the Prime Minister, at all the great sporting occasions from cup finals to test matches is all very well, but when we consider their record in providing sport for the people, it rings hollow.

We must start to change all that. As the Labour party charter says, we shall stop sports fields and sports halls being sold off and end the nonsense of privatisation. We shall encourage local authorities to appoint development officers and create development strategies for sport. We shall insist that every child has the right to learn to swim while in primary school and the right to proper facilities in school for all sport, including team sports.

We shall insist that every sports club providing a service for the community shall be entitled to mandatory relief on sports facilities, as has long been advocated by the Central Council for Physical Recreation.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): On the subject of mandatory rate relief, the right hon. Gentleman will admit that the Government have offered local authorities the option of 100 per cent. rate relief, of which 75 per cent. would be funded by the Government. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can tell us with confidence that all Labour councils will follow the policy that he has outlined and opt for 100 per cent. rate relief. If not, perhaps he can tell us why not.

Mr. Howell: If any Labour council does not follow the advice in our policy I shall be surprised and I shall be pleased to learn about it from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Carlisle: My local council, which, regrettably, is now Labour-controlled, has not followed the policy so far. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could have a word with it.

Mr. Howell: I shall, but I suspect that that council is following the example of its predecessor—the hon. Gentleman's colleagues. I hope that that will soon be put right.

Local government facilities for sport and recreation are not only the main provider of sport for millions of citizens, but a major social service. In inner-city communities, with their varied ethnic make-up, sport is often a positive force for good. Everywhere sport, music, recreation, theatre and the other arts help to raise the spirits of our people, yet they are shamefully treated by the Government.

Local authorities own 1,700 major sports facilities—indoor sports halls, playing fields, water parks and swimming baths. Between 1985 and 1990 the Government have cut the money for running them by 25 per cent. That is the Government's positive contribution to the growth of vandalism and hooliganism. The capital programme is just as bleak. Four years ago local authorities were planning to spend an extra £600 million on badly needed facilities. The Sports Council says that that has now been cut to about £260 million. That is our future going for a burton.

Desperately needed maintenance work is being neglected. It is estimated that during the next 10 years we shall need to spend £1·152 million on maintenance of facilities built in the past 20 years. With present policies, there is no hope of achieving anything like that. There will be more neglect and more facilities will be closed.

No doubt the Minister will say, as the amendment does, that the Government have assisted sport through the creation of the new Foundation of Sport and the Arts. We all know that that was the result of a deal between the pools companies and the Treasury, with the Minister for Sport in absentia. We must welcome any new money for sport, including the £40 million for sport which will come from that source, but there are many worries about the operation. First, there is the question of motive. We all know that the true motivation behind the foundation was not to provide money for sport and the arts but to ditch the possibility of a national lottery, which would have provided much more money.

As our charter says, the next Labour Government will initiate an immediate review of betting and sponsorship to ensure that, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition,

"more of the money earned from sport should be ploughed back into sport."

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The mention of the leader of the Labour party reminds me of the celebrated story about the preparation of a recent Labour party political broadcast. I believe that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was acting as an umpire in a tennis match, but no one could find any tennis facilities in Lambeth, try as they might, so the broadcast had to be made in Tory-controlled Wandsworth. Does the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) hope that areas such as Lambeth will join in the development of sport in that way?

Mr. Howell: If that is the intellectual level on which the debate is to proceed, heaven help us all. Clearly, my right hon. Friend's party political broadcasts are so scintillating that they captivate even the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King).

I should like to correct a report that appeared in *The Sporting Life* that our review will lead to an immediate reduction in VAT on racehorses. That is not so. Our position on the subject is the same as that of the Government. We believe in harmonisation of VAT, and the present wide variety of rates of tax on racehorses throughout Europe is neither acceptable nor lawful. We remain critical of the Government for not having been more effective in bringing about such harmonisation.

Our review will certainly include the proposal for a national lottery. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) made clear, in 1992, the British people are likely to have complete access to European lotteries. It will be nonsensical if our people can buy tickets to build and support sports ventures in other European countries but cannot do so to provide for sport and the arts in the United Kingdom. I must declare a personal interest in this matter, as I am a director—unpaid, I hasten to add—of the National Lottery Promotion Company. What I can say for my party is that, if we endorse a

national lottery—[HON. MEMBERS: "You'll be paid."] I doubt it. We shall seek to safeguard the jobs of people employed in the pools industry in areas of high employment, although we do not accept that a national lottery will have a substantial effect on pools betting. That is not the European experience. Our proposal has the full support of the Sports Council, the Arts Council, the British Olympic Association and most of British sport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): That does not necessarily make it right. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm the estimate that about 6,000 people are currently employed in pools work in areas of high unemployment and that one estimate suggests that only 180 people would be employed in a national lottery? That might have an adverse effect in areas of high unemployment—let alone the regressive nature of the taxation that a national lottery implies.

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman obviously does not know that, half way through the proceedings, before the pools industry consulted Treasury Ministers, I was negotiating—on behalf of the National Lottery Promotion Company—with the industry on the premise that, to protect those jobs, it should run the lottery on our behalf. The pools industry rejected that proposal and went behind our backs. As I have said, however, European experience does not support the bogeyman theory that a national lottery would have a devastating effect on the pools. I certainly do not believe that it would and, in any case, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman wants a built-in monopoly for any one form of providing money for sport, especially when the amount of money that could be available for sport and the arts is as considerable as I believe it to be.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): The right hon. Gentleman is clearing up misapprehensions. On another important point, is it true that if, unfortunately, the Labour party forms a Government after the next election, all private company and commercial sponsorship of sport will be brought to an end?

Mr. Howell: Where on earth did the hon. Gentleman get that idea from? I spent two years as the chairman of the team that conducted a special study for the CCPR into sports sponsorship. I endorsed it fully and my party endorses it fully.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: I am sorry, but I must get on.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): They think that you are still a Minister.

Mr. Howell: As someone said the other day, half the nation thinks that I am still the Minister and the other half thinks that I should be. [HON. MEMBERS: "What modesty!"] Modesty has always been my strong point.

There is also the extraordinary imposition of a levy of 0·2p per line, imposed without consultation on every pools sponsor in the country. That is taxation without representation if ever it existed. Now we learn officially that that cannot be regarded as a voluntary contribution. Customs and Excise has intervened and told the foundation that, unless its money is spent in accordance with the definition of athletic sports as laid down in section 121 of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981, all its income will be liable to betting tax. So much for the voluntary contribution—and what impertinence.

We have now entered the pantomime season; the foundation has been advised—and has ludicrously accepted the advice—that athletic sports do not include archery, sailing, shooting, gliding and all Olympic sports and, possibly, golf, which will soon become an Olympic sport. No wonder the British Olympic Association was furious: it is a gross absurdity.

I cannot understand the refusal of the foundation to offer a grant to the Whelmar Bowmer club, for example. I hope that I shall carry the whole House with me on this and that we shall send a message back through the Minister. That club is an archery club for blind wheelchair users and walking disabled men and women living on the Wirral. It needs equipment and storage, but the trustees of the foundation have turned it down because its application does

"not meet the criteria of allowing aid to athletic sports".

That is disgraceful.

The trustees should show more backbone and interpret "athletics" by the use of common sense. If necessary, they should tell Customs and Excise to go to hell and so should the Minister, who knows all about the matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will tell us that he is doing something about it.

I am not surprised the Mr. Edward Grayson, the distinguished barrister specialising in sporting law, has advised the Central Council for Physical Recreation that the definition as imposed is

"a complete nonsense and a serious misconception that should be put right."

I hope that the Minister will clear up that matter.

School sport is the foundation on which all British sport is built. It is also the means by which every youngster in the land is introduced to the joys and possibilities of sport. Its importance cannot be overstated. It has never been in greater disarray. The Government carry a heavy responsibility for that lamentable state of affairs. To start with——

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): ILEA?

Mr. Howell: What about ILEA?

Mr. Hargreaves: The right hon. Gentleman will, of course, remember, that it was ILEA, then under Labour control, which first introduced into Government-funded schools the absurd and ludicrous principle that competitive sports were injuring the growth and development of young children.

Mr. Howell: I am aware of that widespread libel. [HON. MEMBERS: "Slander."] It was both libel and slander. I investigated the matter in great detail and found that there was no truth whatever in the allegation.

I lament one thing that was happening at the time and so should the Minister. A number of our physical education colleges and inspectors and other professionals were moving away from team sports to individual sports, as though the two were in competition with each other, which is certainly not the case. People who go in for team sports want to go out walking and sailing, and that was ILEA's view. I am glad to have had the opportunity to put that matter right.

[Mr. Howell]

The first thing for which the Government are to blame is the total collapse of teacher morale. Ministers are constantly undermining the profession. Another blow was struck to the cause of voluntary sport in schools when teachers were told that they had to clock in and record 1,265 hours per year plus additional time for marking, making reports and preparation. That meant that they had no time left to supervise school sports. It seems to me that we should properly recognise the amount of time that the country needs teachers to spend organising school sports in the evenings and at weekends and compensate them properly for it. My hon. Friends and I wish to consult widely in the teaching profession on whether such compensation should be given or whether an allowance should be made against the 1,265 hours for teachers who turn out in the evenings and on Saturday mornings.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts recently recommended that teachers of sport be paid for extra-curricular activities and does he support that recommendation?

Mr. Howell: As I have said, we are sympathetic to that proposition and intend to consult widely on it. I am certainly aware of the report. Unlike the Government, we do not impose our views on teacher unions. There is every good reason to consult the teaching profession on whether its members would prefer to be paid for turning out on a Saturday morning or whether they should receive an allowance that they could set against their compulsory hours. Anybody with any responsibility would want to consult on those alternatives and I am in favour of doing just that.

I take this opportunity to compliment the Select Committee on its excellent report, which has something to say to the Government about sport in schools at every point of the compass.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I, too, serve on that Select Committee and was glad to hear what my colleague on it, the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), has just said. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's attacks on the teaching profession during the past 12 years have been appalling and have so lowered teachers' morale that much of the work that they used to carry out voluntarily has now ceased for reasons that are not the fault of the teaching profession? Should not the Government be ashamed of themselves for what they have done to school sports by their constant attacks on the teachers who run those sports?

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend has emphatically stated my case. As president of West Midlands School Sports, I entirely endorse what he said. When I attend athletics championships, I often find that as many as 45 per cent. of the entrants do not turn up because they do not have a teacher to bring them. Such statistics only underline my hon. Friend's point.

We must reverse the trend. This matter will receive urgent consideration from the next Labour Government. We shall also afford a higher place in the machinery of the Sports Council and in grant aid for development work to the National Schools Sports Association.

Perhaps the area of most vital concern is the lack of physical education teachers. It is impossible to trace any in primary schools, which is where all school sports should start. The Department of Education and Science has closed several colleges of physical education and there are now only 13 to serve the needs of all educational establishments. The number of places in physical education colleges has been cut by 21 per cent., so that only 600 specialists qualify every year. Many of them never even reach the classroom or the sports field; they are snapped up by the private sector as soon as they leave college, because the private sector recognises a good thing when it sees it.

I am told that teacher training colleges are receiving a steady stream of frantic telephone calls from head teachers who are desperate for qualified PE teachers. The Department's statistics, which suggest that we have enough teachers, are therefore meaningless in practice. The Department also believes that fewer PE teachers are needed because there is less PE in the curriculum, especially for scholars in the top 14 to 16 age bracket. Thousands of primary school teachers, who already have to cope with seven national curriculum subjects—there will be three more next September—receive no help or in-service training for PE, sport and games. Money must be provided for that training. No one can be in any doubt that primary school teachers are the proper people to train primary school children.

Professor Margaret Talbot wrote to the Minister in April outlining her scheme for a new strategy for INSET training so that the traditional providers of PE teachers —the institutions, the PE advisers and the schools, working together with sport—can meet the needs of the hour. She received a dusty answer from the Minister, who told her:

> "It is very unlikely that we would wish to introduce any new national arrangements which single out physical education for other foundation subjects".

It is sad to reflect that physical education which, like religious education, was understood in Rab Butler's great Education Act 1944 to be an essential requirement for the education of the whole person—both physically and spiritually—no longer has a proper place in the curriculum. It has no champion these days when the Minister for Sport is located in the Department of Education and Science. We can only ask, "What is he doing there? What has he achieved?" We shall be glad to learn later if he has achieved anything.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to outline the current position of sport in schools and the availability of resources and qualified staff. However, we should also put on the record the fact that many schools, such as Hartcliffe secondary school in my constituency, rely on the voluntary contributions of dedicated teachers who work long hours outside their normal hours of work and in collaboration with sports clubs to provide very good coaching in a whole range of sports for pupils in their area, but who do not receive any support, backing or encouragement from the Government. Sport in that school, for example, is provided only because of the contribution of those teachers.

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend has stated what is, regrettably, a fact of life—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Well, she is right to do so. In fact, I heard only this week

that if a PE teacher gives up his lunchtime to take sport and games in his school, he does not get a free lunch, but if he simply supervises the kids in the playground, he does. That is just one of the small anomalies to which I am happy to draw the House's attention tonight.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: Although I have a lot to say, I shall accord precedence to Luton Town football club.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, but will he confirm that competition is discouraged in Labour-run authorities and that some Labour authorities even ban sports days?

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been here when we kicked off this match because we have already dealt with that. I have already discounted such comments as totally untrue.

I turn now to the important subject of dual-use schools where we are facing another crisis. The policy in such schools is to provide extra funds from the local authorities in addition to money from the education budget so that we can provide first-class sports facilities in our schools and colleges for use by scholars in the daytime and by the whole community at all other times. I am proud of that policy because it was started when I was a Minister and has been continued by my Conservative successors.

However, although it has been an enormous success, it is now in grave danger. The Minister has told me personally that, because of the changes in the law brought about by his Government, it is no longer lawful for school governors to allow local authorities to manage dual-use sites, even if the local authority provides them. That dangerous nonsense must be rectified. No local authority in its right mind would provide money for building sports facilities to be used on a dual-use basis if those facilities could later be confiscated and taken from it. I am happy to assure the Minister that if he or one of his hon. Friends introduces a Bill to rectify this matter—I hope that this will happen—it will receive full co-operation and support from the Opposition.

We are concerned about the blatant robbery that is proposed by the governors of some opt-out schools, who seek to confiscate facilities that have been provided by the community and to acquire them as their own. I have in mind schools such as the Great Barr comprehensive in Birmingham where, when the opt-out ballot was taken, the governors did not say that, if they won the ballot, they would wish to take over the £1 million sports hall that had been provided and managed by the local authority together with a large part of the playing fields, which had been provided and managed by the local authority since 1936. But that is exactly what the governors have done. Their silence during the ballot was a deception and their actions now are reprehensible. Ministers must deal with that situation without delay. If they do not, they will kill off dual-use schemes, which is what we warned would happen when this matter was last before the House.

At Great Barr, it is a special disgrace that the governors' first victims have been Greenholme primary school next door, which has lost 50 per cent. of its use of those facilities since the opt-out, and Brooklyn technical college across the road, which has been completely frozen out and now has no access to the sports hall or playing fields. Such governors should not be in public office. They should be removed from it or, if necessary, driven out.

Mr. Rooker: As this is probably the last time that my right hon. Friend will speak in the House on sport, I think that the House owes him a vote of thanks for the way in which he has discussed the issue of sport over the years.

The school that my right hon. Friend mentioned is in my constituency. Not only did I open its sports hall, but I was a pupil there in the 1950s. The playing fields have never been known as school playing fields. They have always been considered as a local recreation ground and they have always been accessible to the public. Although the hall is within the curtilage of the school, it was deliberately built on the boundary of the recreation ground so that it could replace the burnt-out huts, which were damaged through vandalism. That hall was partly funded by the insurance money for the damage.

The hall was never built for the exclusive use of the school. We are talking not about a wooden shack, but about a sports hall worth £1 million. Obviously the hall and the acres of land attached to it can be used exclusively by the school during school hours. However, for the governors to decide to take over those facilities in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays is nothing more than legalised theft. My right hon. Friend will be aware that that decision is totally opposed by the Tory councillors on Birmingham leisure services committee. The only people who support the decision are those Tory councillors who are governors of the school—they happen to be in the majority. Before the Minister makes a decision on the case, he should talk to the Tory, Liberal and Labour councillors of Birmingham, none of whom is in favour of the legalised theft that has taken place.

Mr. Howell: That was a splendid, pertinent intervention. Conservative Members may have considered that it was too long, but I am sure that they would all agree that it is a serious issue. I am sure that the hon. Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) will support their colleagues on the city council.

The Minister should be aware that there is unanimity in Birmingham that it would be wrong for the school, or the assets board, to take over the facilities. I hope that the Minister will intervene, if necessary, to stop such action.

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman will know that the Secretary of State may be asked to consider this matter in due course. Therefore, I cannot be drawn, and nor can he, on the results of that consideration.

Mr. Howell: This is one of those times when I applaud the silence and discretion of the Minister. I hope that it means that the Minister will give deep consideration to the consideration. If a Bill such as that wanted by the Minister and me is introduced on dual use, I shall seek to raise this matter.

Today's debate must recognise the importance to society of voluntary sports clubs. Those organisations keep sport going, week in, week out, year after year. However, all over the country playing fields are being sold off and lost to the community, much of that at the behest of the Government. The Government are selling our

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heritage and betraying our future. The National Playing Fields Association estimates that 800 sites are under threat—equivalent to 10,000 acres of playing space.

The first thing that the Government should do, as we would, is to withdraw the infamous circular 909, which advises local authorities to sell off playing-field space. Croydon council is a particularly bad vandal. It has already disposed of a large playing-field area at Spring Park school, Shirley, and it has another five school fields in its sight. At this rate Croydon will own nothing but concrete.

As we state in our charter, we shall charge the regional sports councils with new responsibilities to resist such a loss of facilities in the planning process and on appeal. Labour Ministers can be expected to give firm guidance on the need to retain essential playing fields for the community.

I am pleased that in the recent planning guidance the Government have suggested to local government that they are not bound to sell recreational land at its full market value, but that they can let it to sports bodies, provided that they can maintain its use for sporting purposes. That is a useful step in the right direction, but it does not meet the understandable desire of many local authorities to get the best price they can for that land because of their critical financial state. We need much more action if we are to preserve playing-field space.

We also believe that the contribution that all voluntary sports clubs make to the community should be recognised by a requirement to grant them a mandatory rate relief of at least 50 per cent. We must face the fact that many of those clubs are being seriously handicapped in different ways, for example, by the imposition of the uniform business rate. That is soul-destroying for many sports clubs.

Another example of pure vandalism by local authorities has just occurred in the Minister's backyard—he knows all about it. The Leyland DAF sports centre is a magnificent facility——

Mr. Atkins: That has nothing to do with education.

Mr. Howell: I never said that it had. I am talking about all voluntary sports clubs.

That magnificent facility provides for football, cricket, tennis, bowls and much more. The Minister has called it a jewel and he said that he would fight for it to the death. But what has happened? The Tory council met behind closed doors, excluding the press and the public, and granted planning permission for development. So much for the citizens charter. No doubt the Minister will tell us how he intends to safeguard that jewel in his crown.

Other statutory bodies are behaving like tin-pot dictators. The Forestry Commission is now charging schools that take their children to Cannock Chase for educational work about the countryside. That is extraordinary. Plas-y-Brenin national sports centre is now so market oriented that, although it was inherited from the CCPR for the use of all outdoor sports participants, it is now charging the hotel price of £50 a night. The British Canoe Union, the British Mountaineering Council and the British Orienteering Federation—the very people for whom Plas-y-Brenin was provided—have all pulled out or will do so soon. That is another disaster brought about by compulsory competitive tendering.

Water authorities everywhere are going bananas. The Water Act 1989 required water authorities to safeguard the best interests of recreation. It said that they should take great care to ensure that existing arrangements, so important to many local communities, were not disturbed. Those important principles are now, I regret to say, being sacrificed everywhere for the highest price. Thames Water has just told Molesey boat club in Surrey that it makes "no discrimination between classes of customers", and "there are no reduced charges for voluntary organisations." That is a denial of the principle of rating relief for sport which attracted universal accord in the House. The Government should intervene.

We are all pleased that our football grounds are becoming much safer. We can welcome the fact that arrests are down by 31 per cent. Much of the credit must go to the Football Trust for providing video equipment that identifies offenders so efficiently and to the police who have used that new technology so skilfully. However, there is much concern about policing costs—£8 million last year. We must encourage clubs to train their own stewards and we should ask the police to reduce their demands for large numbers of officers when it is not necessary.

Another matter about which I feel strongly is the practice of some police forces to impose unreasonable demands on football clubs. They insist on the days of the week when football can take place and impose inconsiderate kick-off times. That is not the business of the police. Football is a lawful occasion. It should be treated as such and provided with the same consideration as any other sport or entertainment.

It is also necessary to express some concern about the development of the Football Association's blueprint for football. I agree with the Sports Council that it is a matter for concern that so many organisations which have a legitimate interest in the development of football were not consulted about it. Those include the Sports Council, the paying public in the shape of supporters' associations and the work force, the Football Association, the managers and the secretaries. It is good for the Football Association to think of planning for the future, but good government involves consultation and taking account of the rights of all interested parties.

Mr. Rathbone: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way on second request. He has not mentioned drugs in sport and it looks as though he is not about to do so. I hope that there is cross-party support for the Government's position in support of the Council of Europe's convention on doping in sport. It is important to sportsmen and to the youngsters who admire them.

Mr. Howell: Absolutely.

Another commitment which Labour makes in its charter for sport is on the importance of international sport, especially great sports festivals such as the Olympic games, Commonwealth games, European games and world championships. The Government pay lip service to their importance, but provide no practical help. In contrast, the last Labour Government made available substantial financial aid for the football world cup in 1966 and the Edinburgh Commonwealth games in 1970. The next time round, Edinburgh did not receive a penny piece

towards its 1986 Commonwealth games. Nor did Sheffield for the world student games that were staged earlier this year.

Mr. Atkins: That is not true.

Mr. Howell: In that case, will the Minister explain what happened?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman must know that money was made available to the world student games through the Sports Council, which is a Government fund.

Mr. Howell: Yes, but we cannot maintain those great festivals with the small amount of money made available to the Sports Council for everyone. I do not regard that as the special Government funding for which the Sheffield student games and the Commonwealth games called.

May I add a word of congratulation on the outstanding success with which Sheffield staged those games, despite the fact that its ratepayers were deserted by the Government. It was the same story with the Olympic bids of Birmingham and Manchester and the first-class hosting of the International Olympic Committee conference in Birmingham this year. The Sports Council helped in all those events so far as resources allowed. However, such major international events will never take place in this country unless international sport is taken seriously and there is major Government involvement in them. The Manchester bid must involve a capital expenditure of hundreds of millions of pounds—I am told £800 million or £900 million. Manchester is rate capped, so it is difficult to see how it can provide substantial funds from its own resources. As we know, the private sector is experiencing great difficulties, so it would be equally unlikely that it could finance such a vast investment at present. The same story will be repeated on the revenue consequences of providing 20 Olympic facilities if Manchester wins the bid, as we all hope.

The Government must be involved if this country is to be taken seriously. The Labour party is committed to doing so, as the Government should be if they are properly to aid Manchester's cause. The British sporting public deserves the best of world sport. We back the Football Association bid to stage the European championships and hope that they will lead to future world championships.

We want the best for the United Kingdom, both in international sport and for the enjoyment of youngsters who are being denied it at present. The motion and Labour's charter for sport set out that essential strategy, which is necessary to bring those wishes about. I commend them to the House.

8.5 pm

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Robert Atkins): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the commitment of Her Majesty's Government to sport in the United Kingdom in the provision of grant to the Sports Council for 1992-93 of £48·8 million, which has been increased in line with forecast inflation next year, complemented by new funds of the order of £40 million this year from the Sports and Arts Foundation and the £20 million per annum additional money from the Football Trust, and a further £0·7 million for the Champion Coaching Scheme; recognises the important decision to make physical education a mandatory subject in the National Curriculum from the start of the next academic year and the lead given by Her Majesty's Government in international matters such as drug abuse and the participation of South Africa in international sport; and further believes that Her Majesty's Government has demonstrated its high priorities in the sporting field as opposed to the out-dated, uncosted, bureaucratic, interfering and irrelevant policies of Her Majesty's Opposition and its allies.'.

Let me get one thing straight from the beginning. Despite the whingeing generalities which we have heard from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), the provision and achievement of sport in this country illustrates a success story. A specific example is the fact that this morning I have been in Harrogate on the last day of the RAC Lombard rally, which is the largest spectator event in the United Kingdom and one of the largest in Europe. There were about 250,000 spectators on the first day alone, and more than a million in the course of the five days. The rally will raise substantial sums of money—many millions of pounds—for this country. It is a typical example of the many success stories.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that the RAC rally came through Sutton park in Birmingham on the first day and was watched by tens of thousands of local people who thoroughly enjoyed the event and identified closely with the cars? Will he extend his congratulations to the tenth competitor to arrive home—the first British driver—Louise Aitken Walker and her co-driver, which proves that lady drivers in the United Kingdom are tops?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has as much knowledge of such matters as anyone. He makes his point well and I am delighted to associate myself with his congratulations.

As demonstrated by the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and many others of my right hon. Friends, as well as by my move to the Department of Education and Science, sport is a high priority for the Government. First, it enhances the health of the young and old. Secondly, it gives a sense of achievement on personal, regional, national and international bases. It also provides great relaxation and recreation.

Sport needs money. It requires action to be taken in education and the structure to be examined. Above all, as the right hon. Member for Small Heath concluded in his lengthy speech, it needs action on the international front.

I shall shorten my remarks to allow as many hon. Members as possible to speak because much time has been taken up. I shall deal with the points in the order in which they were raised by the right hon. Member for Small Heath. First, he raised the question of money. Direct central Government finance for sport is channelled through the sports councils. I am responsible for the Sports Council for Great Britain which, through grant aid, assists in the provision of sports facilities at local, regional and national levels.

To enable the Sports Council for Great Britain to carry out its important tasks, its grant in aid has been increased in real terms by just less than 30 per cent. when 1979-80 is compared with the grant recently announced for 1992-93 of some £48·8 million. Contrary to recent press reports, the latest grant has increased in line with forecast inflation and will enable the Sports Council to maintain its existing programmes. Funding for the three other sports councils has increased in real terms between 1979-80 and 1991-92 by 25 per cent.

I cannot mention funds without talking about the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Opposition Members

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lock that foundation but it provides a substantial new tranche of money for sport that was not previously available.

Mr. Denis Howell: Before the Minister discusses the foundation, will he confide to the House why the grant aid increase for sport differed so dramatically from the grant aid increase for the arts?

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman should ask the Minister for the Arts if he wants to know why the arts provision has been increased. The sports increase was in line with inflation and we have provided other funds which I am discussing now. The right hon. Gentleman should recognise that—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. Either he wants more money for sport or he does not. In addition to the year-on-year increase to the Sports Council, we are providing a further £40 million or thereabouts to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Does the right hon. Gentleman object to that?

Mr. Howell: No, but I am well aware that when the scheme was announced the Minister said that it would be funded with new money and should not be regarded as coming within the Sports Council's estimate. The Minister has departed from that and is now telling us that he is no good at fighting the battle for sport with the Treasury and that his colleague, the Minister for the Arts, is about 10 times more successful.

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman has got it wrong; he ignores the money that has been made available. Additional funds well in excess of inflation have been provided for grants to the Sports Council. The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He made a lengthy speech complaining about the size of funds available for sport. I am now telling him that we provide a jolly sight more money than the Labour Government did when he was a Minister, and he should recognise that.

New funds of £40 million have been provided for sport in addition to that already available. As my hon. Friends know full well, a number of grant aids have already been made from the Sports and Arts Foundation. There are small ones such as the Corah bowling club in Leicester and the Ideas factory in Stockport and, at national level, the Sports Aid Foundation and the National Coaching Foundation, which have received substantial amounts of money. In addition, a grant is being made available to help prepare our athletes for the Olympics in Barcelona.

I was also able to find £700,000 at the start of this year, through the Sports Council, to give to the National Coaching Foundation to set up the champion coaching scheme. Since I last mentioned that scheme in our debate on sport and recreation in May, it has gone from strength to strength. It has proved so attractive that more than 6,000 children now participate in it in 24 regions in England in 11 different sports. That was originally a pilot scheme, when we expected that about 3,600 children would participate, but the demand for it has been so strong that that number has already risen to 6,000.

The reports that I am receiving, not only through my visits to a number of such schemes, but from the director-general of the National Coaching Foundation and others involved at local and regional level, are that the project is going wonderfully well, and they hope that it will be expanded. I have hopes for that in future years. I am most impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the youngsters, coaches and, above all, the parents who have become involved in activities such as transporting the children.

In addition to that £700,000 I was able to find a further £300,000 as a direct result of my move from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Education and Science—which makes a total of £1 million —*[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may scoff but those who received the £300,000—people with disabilities—were delighted that we had been able to find that extra money. It demonstrated that the Government believe that integration of disabled sport into able-bodied sport is important, even if Opposition Members do not.

There has been some good news in relation to sports sponsorship. The Government have been keen to encourage partnership with the private sector in sports sponsorship. Sport in the United Kingdom is benefiting from more than £200 million a year of funding from its sponsors. Despite rumours to the contrary from Opposition Members, the figures that I have seen for the first half of this year are extremely encouraging and show more than 450 new and extended sponsorships and a net gain of £11 million. That flies in the face of the doom and gloom that we hear from the Opposition.

I am anxious for more sponsorship of sports events at grass roots, to encourage greater participation by the community in taking full advantage of the opportunities. The Institute of Sports Sponsorship recently made proposals to me for a new sponsorship incentive scheme similar to that run so successfully for the arts, but targeted at the grass roots level. I am giving those proposals extremely serious consideration.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have no objection to sports sponsorship by tobacco companies, and are expressing concern at the new European Community directive that tries to ban tobacco advertising in sports grounds? Will he explain where the Government stand on that issue?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has raised an issue dealt with in my very next line—tobacco sponsorship. The Government attach importance to the need for people to be aware of the risk of smoking. However, they also believe that sport should be able to benefit from legitimate tobacco sponsorship, provided that it is subject to proper control.

The latest figures show that £7·2 million was made available to sport through sponsorship by the tobacco industry. The sponsorship covered major national events in a wide variety of sports including cricket, rugby league, motor racing, horse racing, golf and darts. We believe that the current voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry provides proper control.

I do not take too kindly to the Commission suggesting in a directive that there should be a ban on tobacco sponsorship when it spends about four times the amount of money on subsidies to Greek tobacco owners to produce more tobacco. The Commission should examine its own house before it starts telling us what to do. There is a possibility that if tobacco sponsorship were forbidden, alcohol sponsorship might take its place. It provides substantial sponsorship of about £30 million.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): Tobacco kills—so does alcohol.

Mr. Atkins: Of course it kills. But I have enough respect for the British public to believe that they can make up their own minds about which events they want to see. All the evidence suggests that in ever larger numbers the British public are prepared to watch events sponsored by the tobacco industry. It seems that they feel as strongly about the issue as anyone else. No one is arguing about health, but we are talking about the freedom of legitimate companies and governing bodies to sell sponsorship properly. Therefore, my direct answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) is that I shall continue to resist the directive, as will the Government.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I appreciate the Minister's point about sports income from such advertising, but are there any figures on the cost to the national health service of chest illnesses arising from smoking? That figure must be far in excess of the income received from tobacco advertising.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me if I do not get drawn into the issue of what the Exchequer raises in tobacco tax or what the health costs are, because I genuinely do not know. My responsibility is for the sponsorship of sport by the tobacco industry, which involves a substantial amount of money—about £7·2 million. If other sponsorship were available, that might make a difference, but it is not. Therefore, the substantial loss to sport were tobacco sponsorship to be removed would be detrimental to the future of major national events. I prefer to leave it to the British public to decide what they want to do.

Important improvements in safety and comfort at football grounds have been made. In particular, all-seat accommodation, has been achieved by the additional £20 million a year released to the Football Trust following the reduction of 2·5 per cent. in pool betting duty in last year's Budget. The Government have provided £100 million over five years, initially by my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, now the Prime Minister. Those higher standards of provision should assist in the continuing improvement in spectator behaviour that enabled our clubs to return to European competitions so successfully last season.

I have also supported any moves to bring together the Football Association, the Football League, the Professional Footballers Association and, where appropriate, the supporters, so that an agreed agenda for the development of the game can be established. From what the right hon. Member for Small Heath said, I suspect that there is not much disagreement between us on that. We all recognise that there is a need for football to move forward and to consider its future structure. That requires the necessary leadership to seize the opportunities for the benefit of the game as a whole.

I have also consistently emphasised how important it is for football clubs to enter into partnership with local authorities, the private sector, other sports organisations and possibly local employers, and to devise some imaginative schemes for football grounds. I should like more thought to be given to exploring the full sports and leisure potential of the new and refurbished football stadia of the future. It is essential to get away from the notion that football grounds are used solely for football once or twice a week.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, particularly as I had to leave to take a phone call when he was speaking earlier.

As regards multipurpose stadia, if the Scottish Football Association—which is considering various options including the renovation of Hampden park—concluded that it wished to support a private sector-led, multipurpose national sports and football stadium, perhaps led by major private companies, would the Government view that sympathetically? Would they give the association initial support? I do not ask the Minister to give a figure, but would the Government make some capital input to what would be a much-used, new national stadium that would be economically self-sufficient thereafter?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman poses an interesting question. As a Scot, he will appreciate that I would have to speak to my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport in Scotland because his version of a national stadium for Scotland would not be for me to consider initially. That Minister cannot be here for the whole of the debate, but I am sure that he will read the report of the debate and may wish to talk to the hon. Gentleman. As I say, it is not directly an issue for the English Minister for Sport and I prefer not to be drawn on the matter.

The sheer scale of local authority provision for sport and active recreation over the past 10 years is sometimes overlooked by Opposition Members. Local authorities are required to supply revenue and capital expenditure returns to the Department of the Environment each year. Defining sport and active recreation as closely as we can from returns, gross expenditure in England and Wales rose from some £333 million in 1979-80 to some £1·028 billion in 1989-90, the year for which we have the most recent data. That represents an increase in real terms of more than 50 per cent. over the 10-year period.

Gross capital outturn expenditure by local authorities on sport and active recreation in England increased from £184 million in 1987-88 to £335 million in 1989-90, an increase in real terms of nearly 70 per cent.

As a result of these real increases in both revenue and capital expenditure by local authorities, with assistance from the Sports Council, we have seen a significant growth in the number and range of local sport and active recreation facilities provided. According to Sports Council figures, the number of sports halls and leisure centres in England has increased from under 800 in 1981 to about 1,500 by the end of last year. In 1990-91, 53 sports halls were completed and a further 45 were under construction.

Contrary to the impression which Opposition Members and especially the right hon. Member for Small Heath would like to give, there has not been a decline in the number of public swimming pools. The number of conventional swimming pools in England increased to approximately 1,140 by the end of 1990-91 and, in addition, there were about 150 leisure pools. That compares with 1,000 swimming pools in the early 1980s. There were also 272 artificial turf pitches in England by the end of 1990-91, of which 55 were completed and a further 18 were under construction. Those figures are equally impressive.

[Mr. Atkins]

Furthermore, this activity by local authorities and the Sports Council contributed to the large increase in participation levels during the 1980s. Between 1977 and 1987—the period for which we have most comprehensive statistics—the percentage of the adult population regularly taking part in sport and physical exercise rose from 45·3 per cent. to 56·6 per cent.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath spoke about the planning policy guidance note. I am delighted with the reception that it has received since I investigated it when I was in the Department of the Environment wearing my other hat as Minister responsible for planning. Obviously, I have watched its progress since I transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Education and Science. It has been well received by all those involved in sports provision as giving an essential framework for the planning of sports provision. It provides constructive advice on planning sport and recreation development in a wide range of areas, and advice on how to handle some of the more difficult planning issues that can arise in particular sports.

The guidance note also makes clear that local authorities should ensure that the existing stock of playing fields and open space available for sport and recreation is not depleted without taking into account the long-term needs of the community for recreation or amenity open space. It makes quite clear to local authorities that playing fields should normally be protected, and that local plans should include a statement of the extent of the community's requirements for sports pitches and policies on the protection of playing fields. They should also take account of the register of recreational land that is being prepared by the Sports Council as a result of the £500,000 that I made available at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Playing fields that are available to the public either through a local authority or under the terms of a trust should surely be available to local schools to use for proper recreational purposes. The Minister knows that adjacent to the city technology college in my constituency there is a large playing field owned by the Hustler trust which is administered by the Labour controlled Cleveland county council. Since the city technology college was established, the use of that field, which was previously available to the school, has been denied. Is not that a fine example of how Labour's fine words in the motion are belied by its actions on the ground?

Mr. Atkins: I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised this matter. It reminds me of an incident in Cleveland concerning a boy who was fortunate enough to be able to play football for Middlesbrough Town. He played until he was unfortunate enough, in the context of a Labour controlled council, to gain a place at Cleveland CTC. As a result he was prevented from playing the game that he loved. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and my late hon. Friend Richard Holt made it quite clear that they would continue to be associated with our campaign against that vindictive decision for as long as was needed. I am glad to be able to confirm that at long last Cleveland school sport council has decided to allow Cleveland CTC to take part in school events, thereby allowing my hon. Friend's young constituent to participate. That has happened thanks to my hon. Friend and the late Richard Holt. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his achievement.

Mr. Devlin: I apologise for again interrupting my hon. Friend during his speech. Although we are pleased that Macmillan college is now allowed to play against other schools, a rearguard action is being fought by a small group of teachers in the county who say that they will not administer games between the CTC and other schools. That is totally disgraceful, given that the majority of those who took part in the meeting of the school sport council decided not to allow this ridiculous and vindictive ban to continue.

Mr. Atkins: That is an action by the party which is supposed to be greatly in favour of sport. It makes one wonder.

Mr. Denis Howell: I share the concern. The Minister made it clear that the reversal was decided by Cleveland school sport council and not the local authority. As he has said, it was not the responsibility of the local authority but that of the local sports council.

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman knows that that local sports council is funded by Cleveland council.

Mr. Howell *rose*——

Mr. Atkins: I should like to get on with my speech. The right hon. Gentleman spoke for an hour.

Mr. Denis Howell: The Minister should withdraw that. Is he saying that every time a local authority or the Government fund a voluntary body they are responsible for the policies of that body? That is ridiculous.

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman cannot slip and slide away from the actions of his party in Cleveland. It made a vindictive decision to prevent a young boy from playing football. As a result of the pressure exerted by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South and the late Richard Holt, that decision has been reversed. That is why the Opposition are shouting. They know that they got it wrong and that at long last my hon. Friend has put matters right.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I should prefer the hon. Gentleman to allow me to make progress. However, I shall give way.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister take this opportunity to be even-handed by condemning private fee-paying schools that ban football?

Mr. Atkins: I am not aware of any private fee-paying schools that ban football.

Mr. Canavan: Association football.

Mr. Atkins: We are being drawn down a cul-de-sac. If the hon. Gentleman has a case that he would like to raise with the Minister who has responsibility for sport in Scotland, I am sure that my hon. Friend would be delighted to receive it.

I shall now deal with sport for young people as it relates to our education service. Crucial to encouraging greater participation in sport and the increased use of sports facilities is the attitude of young people to sport. That is

why introducing school children to the practice of sport and physical recreation is one of the Government's key priorities. Teachers clearly have an essential role, which the Government fully recognise, both in developing sporting skills within physical education as part of the curriculum and in providing a range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities.

The importance of PE in schools is reflected in the important decision taken by the Government to include for the first time as a foundation. subject physical education for all pupils from age five up to 16 in maintained schools in England and Wales. The Labour party was not prepared to do that when it was in office. That is another key mandatory requirement which was part of the physical education working party's recommendations and one that we were delighted to agree with.

The working group's final report was published in the summer along with the proposals for physical education in the national curriculum by the Secretaries of State. I congratulate the working group, under the chairmanship of Ian Beer, a former headmaster of Harrow school. All the members of the working group contributed greatly to a cogent and well-argued report, and one that we largely accepted. Most of all, it said that competitive games were an essential part of a programme of physical education. I, and I am sure all my hon. Friends, heartily endorse that view. Given my love of cricket and rugby union, I doubt that anyone would be surprised by that.

I am concerned, as I am sure that the right hon. Member for Small Heath and others are, about the problem of the scheduling of organised team games within the curriculum. This problem is made all the more difficult at the end of a summer term, which seems to be getting earlier and earlier, when exams impede the adequate provision of summer team games. I have drawn this problem to the attention of the independent School Examinations and Assessment Council and I hope that it will recognise that this is a concern of all hon. Members and react accordingly to it.

The working group stressed the importance of partnerships in sport and made some particularly helpful suggestions. In view of what the right hon. Member for Small Heath said earlier, I should record my appreciation of, and support for, physical education teachers, and their status. I understand the need for there to be more of them and for them to be better appreciated. I am keen that the head of PE in every school, whether male or female, should be part of the head teachers' management body and play an important role in the day-to-day running of physical education in schools. I am also pleased to add my support for, and gratitude to, the many part-time teachers or teachers who, in a part-time capacity, act after school in coaching youngsters at all levels. That is another success story that the Labour party is ignoring.

Consideration is being given to how best to ensure that teachers can be properly trained to teach all the core and foundation subjects in the national curriculum, including PE. Recruitment to teacher training has increased steadily and stands at the highest level in recent years. The Department's projections suggest a plentiful supply of PE teachers for secondary schools in the 1990s. Recruitment to secondary initial teacher training courses in 1991 was 1,130, exceeding the allocation of funded places of 750 by 50 per cent.

Another important aspect of the PE working group's report is school swimming. The PE working group's proposals envisage a requirement that all pupils be taught to swim by age 11 and the Government have accepted, in principle, this recommendation. We share the view of the physical education working group and of the "Swim for Life" campaign that swimming is a vital, life-saving skill. My Department is carrying out a survey to assess the feasibility and cost of the proposed requirement and to calculate when it should be introduced in schools. The survey will be completed by the end of this year and cover access to swimming pools, the average cost of building suitable primary school pools and the average cost of teaching a child a swim. The initial sample survey carried out by the PE working group showed that already 85 per cent. of the primary schools surveyed already provide swimming as part of their curriculum.

The House will be fully aware that one of the aspects of sport dear to my heart, and I suspect, given his former incarnation as a referee, to the heart of the right hon. Member for Small Heath, is fair play. I feel strongly as a parent that if youngsters lose the feeling of fairness and understanding of fair play at a young age, they are unlikely to regain it when they grow up. When I came to this job, I made it clear publicly that one of my aims was to do something about paying some attention to that.

I am delighted that, on the occasions when I have raised this matter, both in the House and around organisations the length and breadth of the country, it seems to have struck a chord with parents and governing bodies alike. I am delighted that the Sports Council has instituted its fair play award in conjunction with BBC Radio 5 and that the Central Council of Physical Recreation has introduced its Stanley Matthews award. A variety of other organisations and people, including his royal highness the Duke of Edinburgh and the Princess Royal, have associated themselves strongly with this aspect of sport. It is one that I know that every hon. Member feels as strongly about as I do.

My next subject is dual-use and encouraging the community use of sports facilities at schools. This is a long-standing objective of the Government and much has been achieved. Local management of schools gives greater discretion to school governing bodies to determine their priorities and every incentive to make optimal use of their sports facilities, including dual-use. To encourage this further, the Department has recently published its guidance booklet, "A Sporting Double: School and Community", which has been well received.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath referred to section 42 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, which we hope to be able to amend so that the problem of governors entering into joint management agreements can be addressed. I am grateful to him and to the Liberal Democrats spokesman for their offer to allow this to have all-party support when we can find a colleague to take the matter up and pursue it through the House.

Some mention has been made of the review that I inherited briefly when I moved to this job and to which I attach great importance. It examined a whole series of aspects of the Sports Council structure and related matters. I have not set a deadline on when this review will be published because I want above all to listen to what people say. As a result, I held a conference in April with a full range of organisations involved in encouraging sport for young people, and we listened to what they had to say. They included youth clubs, governing bodies and groups from education. It was extremely well received and they

[Mr. Atkins]

told me that they had never had this opportunity before. As a result of those discussions, we shall be taking action and reporting soon.

The concept of partnership, which was fundamental to all this, embraces the idea of young people, their parents, schools, communities and businesses working together. The focus of activity is young people. I have made it clear at international level what I have set out to do and the Government, through the Prime Minister, have done much the same. We have the great objective of trying to improve and build upon the Government's commitment to international support at a variety of levels. Here, I pick out particularly—I suspect that the House will agree with me—the subject of South Africa.

The House owes a great debt of gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the amount of work that he has done in encouraging the involvement of South Africa in international sport. Particularly dear to my heart is the fact that cricket has led the way. I pay special tribute to Colin Cowdrey who, as chairman of the International Cricket Council, has done an enormous amount of work travelling the world trying to ensure that the changes in South Africa—albeit not as great as we would wish, but a step in the right direction—have allowed cricket and a variety of other sports to become active internationally again. How good it was the other day to see South Africa playing in India and I hope that this will go from strength to strength. We all welcome that and I hope that all sports in South Africa, as they merge and their organisations become one, will be able to play a greater part.

Another subject of great concern to us is doping and drugs—one of the main threats to international sport. The Government have been active in countering the threat through international action. They have played a leading role in the preparation and monitoring of the Council of Europe's anti-doping convention, which came into force in 1990. We have also signed a trilateral anti-doping agreement with the Governments of Australia and Canada.

Domestically, the Government have fought the doping threat through the creation of the Sports Council's independent drug testing regime in 1988 and through enhanced measures, announced earlier this year, to tackle the use of anabolic steroids, including the creation of a new criminal offence of providing steroids to a minor. The fact that only 45 illegal substances were detected out of nearly 4,000 tests conducted by the Sports Council in 1991 bears testament to the success of these policies.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: My hon. Friend will know of my long-term interest in this subject. I urge him to use his influence and his new position within the Department of Education to extend education on the dangers of drugs in sport to young people as they first become involved in sport. Will he say something about that?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that topic about which he feels strongly and which we can do more to encourage. The need to make youngsters appreciate early on the devastating effect of drugs is not confined to the world of sport alone but applies to a wide variety of other aspects of life. From that point of view, I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention.

I am conscious of the time. I have not yet spoken for as long as the right hon. Member for Small Heath. I have only a page and a half of my brief left, but he raised a number of topics and I have tried to answer them.

Sir John Farr: So far, my hon. Friend has not mentioned shooting, which is probably Britain's biggest participator sport with about 2·5 million active participants. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Government fully support shooting in all its forms? In addition, he may care to comment on the Labour party's proposal to limit one legally held gun of any type to any one person.

Mr. Atkins: An hon. Friend once told me that there are only three sports, hunting, shooting and fishing; all the rest are merely active recreation. My hon. Friend is an expert in shooting and I defer to him. I enjoy a shoot and, judging by the majority of people who do the same, I am not alone. I should be interested to know what the Opposition think about the matter. They appear to be in favour of angling, but against shooting.

Mr. Denis Howell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend will be delighted to know that. We may hear more about that in due course.

The Manchester Olympic bid concerns a number of hon. Members, not least me as a north-west Member. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) and I have had a number of discussions with representatives of the Manchester Olympic bid committee. They have already been to see the Prime Minister who has expressed keen interest and support and has asked them to consider a number of suggestions. They have gone away to do so and will in due course come back with some ideas which will be considered by the Government. Therefore, it is unfair for the right hon. Member for Small Heath to say that we are not supporting the Manchester bid. We have not yet made a decision. We are waiting for the Manchester Olympic bid committee to put a detailed case to us.

Mr. Denis Howell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. We are waiting for the committee to put a detailed case to us which we shall convey to the Prime Minister and then the matter will be considered. No decision in any way, shape or form has yet been made.

Mr. Howell: If that means that the Government might well give some substantial assistance to Manchester, I would welcome it. But the previous Prime Minister and, in the early days of his premiership, the present Prime Minister made it clear that they would support the Manchester bid only if it was a completely private sector bid. However, if the Government are now changing their stance on that, on behalf of the Opposition, I welcome it.

Mr. Atkins: I am not making any change; I am merely saying that no decision have yet been made because we are awaiting the bid from Manchester.

I make no apologies for answering the right hon. Gentleman's points. After all, this is an Opposition day debate. The Opposition have raised the subject and I have tried to answer their points. Before I sit down I want to address myself briefly to the Opposition.

The Opposition have made great play of "Charter for Sport". The Liberals have not published any such document so we have no idea what their policy is on sport. However, no doubt we shall hear in due course. But the Labour's policy for sport is filled with contradiction. For example, when the right hon. Member for Small Heath announced "Charter for Sport" he said that he wanted, among other things, to rejuvenate and reorganise the Sports Council through much more ministerial involvement to offer the leadership so badly needed. But it says in "Charter for Sport" that the Labour party wants to avoid political bias. I should like to know how Ministers can be more involved in running sport without political bias.

Mr. David Evans: Has the Labour party costed its proposals in "Charter for Sport"?

Mr. Atkins: I was about to come to the costing of the Labour party's policy. We have heard much about international events but we have not heard where the money for them will be found. We have heard about mandatory rate relief, for which money will have to be found. We have heard about payment for teachers after hours, for which money will have to be found. We have heard about tax exemptions and reviews, for which money will have to be found. I can do no more than quote the right hon. Member for Small Heath when he announced the charter. He said:

"A Labour Chancellor cannot provide us with the resources we want."

I bet he cannot. Is this spending a high priority, an important priority or just a priority, or will it not happen at all? We need to know where that money is coming from.

If nothing else, the Labour party has been guilty of inaction. There was some criticism some time ago that I was not answering questions in the House as the Minister for Sport. I did a spot of research and discovered that of all the questions asked only 33 had come from the Opposition, less than 50 per cent., and none had come from the right hon. Member for Small Heath. The only debates on the subject have been initiated by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). Perhaps he, rather than the right hon. Gentleman, should be on the Opposition Front Bench. There is a gentleman who knows a little bit about sport and is active in it. I should like to know who is speaking for the Opposition in that regard.

We heard earlier about the blind prejudice from Cleveland. But, above all, this document, which is outdated and irrelevant as the amendment says, is guilty of no more or less than plagiarism. It contains a number of ideas which it claims to be new. On page 9 it says:

"We will secure a prominent and appropriate place for sport and physical education within the school curriculum".

I have just said that we have made physical education compulsory up to the age of 16.

On page 11 it says:

"Football spectators have suffered more than others. Urgent action is needed to improve the quality of our football grounds."

That will cost £20 million a year for five years.

That is more plagiarism of our ideas. So it goes on. On page 14 it says:

"we will welcome the return of South Africa to international sport".

The Government have done it already. We have taken the lead. Wherever one turns, whatever we do, it is the Government, from the Prime Minister downwards, who have given sport a high priority. Opposition Members make a great deal of noise, but when it comes down to it their ideas are out of date, irrelevant and uncosted. Everyone knows that they do not know what sport is all about.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to the House that there is only a little over an hour left. As many hon. Members wish to take part, I appeal for brief speeches.

8.47 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I am grateful to be able to speak from any Bench in this debate. It is good that the Opposition have once more been able to bring the Minister kicking and screaming to the Dispatch Box. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has provided with his usual aplomb the reasons why most people regard him as the best Minister for Sport that Britain has ever produced. However, having paid him that compliment, I should say that he was a little over-generous in giving way to so many Conservative Members. He must know by now that most of their interventions are rather spurious.

This is the fourth time since last December that the Minister has had a chance to speak in a debate on sport, and each time it has been the Labour party which has brought him to the Dispatch Box. I am not telling the Minister anything that he does not already know, but he must be aware that the Labour party is the only party that gives him the opportunity to offer his responses, however inadequate, to the challenges facing sport throughout 1991, the year of sport.

I should have thought that the Minister might care to reflect on the failure of his team mates to offer him any similar chances to speak in the House. Recognising the number of people who want to speak in the debate, he might lean on the Government Whips to ensure that we have a full day's debate in Government time so that we can debate these issues fairly and squarely. Unfortunately, the Minister is not the only person who is unwilling to arrange that.

Astoundingly, it has been claimed in recent Tory party press releases, and by the Minister in a recent seminar at the Institute of Sports Sponsorship—and elsewhere—that Labour's interest in sport is new found. The Minister has said that Labour Members rarely raise the subject in Parliament. When I heard those claims, I thought that the Minister must be suffering from a memory lapse. I distinctly remember debating sport with him on a number of occasions, as do my hon. Friends. On 20 December last year, we debated the problems facing football; on 28 February, we debated sport in schools; on 23 May, we debated sport and recreation. All those debates were initiated by the Opposition.

Mr. Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Pendry: I will not give way now. I will invite the Minister to intervene later, but I want to give as many hon. Members as possible an opportunity to speak.

I gave the Minister a gentle prod. Nearly three weeks ago, I wrote to remind him of the occasions on which we had been sparring partners, and pointed out that the Government had not initiated a single debate on sport

[Mr. Pendry]

since December 1990. I asked him to withdraw his comments. Amazingly, I have not received so much as an acknowledgment, let alone a retraction.

As the Minister knows, I am a forgiving man, and I am prepared to overlook his laxity. Would he like to intervene now, and tell us whether the Government have initiated a single debate on this subject during the Year of Sport?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. I exempted him specifically; I said that he was the only Opposition Member who initiated debates and asked questions. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has not asked a single question, or initiated a single debate, until today.

Mr. Pendry: That is not true, and the Minister knows it. Moreover, he has carefully avoided my main charge —that the Government have no interest in sport and do not wish to debate it.

Given the Minister's current relations with the British sporting world, he needs all the favours that he can get. He must feel particularly uncomfortable in sporting circles nowadays—especially in the light of the Government's decision to cut the Sports Council's grant again, which they repeatedly deny having made: they do so again in the amendment to our motion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, quoting the chairman of the Sports Council, rightly described that decision as a kick in the teeth.

Fifteen days ago, I called the Minister to account for that shameful act. I reminded him of the swingeing cuts —amounting, in real terms, to nearly £60 million—that the Government had made between 1986-87 and 1991-92 in funding to sport through grants to the sports councils and support for sport through the urban aid programme. Instead of coming clean, and honestly admitting to the House that the state of affairs was disgraceful, the Minister sought to hide the truth. He gave details of the funds that were going to British sport from sources that have precious little to do with the Government's spending.

The Minister told the House:

"the Government can lay claim to spending more money on sport than any party has done for many years."

That is not true, and he knows it. He has a clear duty to halt the shabby deception of the House that has been perpetuated by the Government's amendment, and confirm that the Government have slashed funds for sport over the past five years.

The Minister, of course, has the reputation of being less than a financial wizard. Since April, he has wasted six months in trying to claim that the Sports and Arts Foundation would be given £75 million. Along with others, I have pointed out in three separate debates, and in letters, that his estimate was £15 million short. He was finally forced to admit his error in a written answer on 22 October. It is no use the Minister shaking his head, unless he did not write the answer himself. Tonight's amendment shows the same miscalculation.

When I challenged him 15 days ago, the Minister attempted to answer the worry expressed about the cuts by the chairman of the Sports Council:

"the increase in grant to the Sports Council is 4·4 per cent., which is more than the rate of inflation . . . I spoke to the chairman of the Sports Council this morning and pointed out that the increase in grant is in excess of inflation. Therefore, his comment was wrong."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1991; Vol 198, c. 886.]

It is clear that the Minister has now been told by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that that claim was inaccurate. According to the autumn statement, the increase in grant to the Sports Council in 1992 will fail to keep pace with inflation for that year; the chairman of the Sports Council was right. Even the Government's amendment has back-tracked on what the Minister previously said. A fortnight ago, he told the House that the grant would be in excess of inflation; the amendment says that it will be "in line" with inflation. The truth is that it will fail to match inflation.

The Minister must publicly apologise, both to the House and to the chairman of the Sports Council. My hon. Friends and I look forward to that—although we hope that he will not do it tonight, as that would take up still more of the House's time. It does him no good at all to waste everyone's time in covering up the Government's failings. He must use his energies more usefully by presenting a positive strategy for British sport.

As the Minister has said, there are promising signs in the sporting world, but that is no thanks to the Government. The newly established British Sports Forum at last unites the United Kingdom's major non-governmental sports organisations in a single body, and I hope that the Minister's review, whenever it appears, will fully endorse that initiative.

At a recent conference of the General Association of International Sports Federations in Sydney, several members of the International Olympic Committee and other delegates were heard to praise Britain for its historical contribution to world sport, but added that they could not vote for a Manchester bid unless Britain's national sports bodies spoke with a united voice. The establishment of the British Sports Forum is excellent news, but it is vital that the Government play a central role in creating the right climate for it to operate effectively.

Some people involved in sport must now be choking on their description of the Minister's arrival at the Department of Education and Science—together with the transfer of the present Prime Minister from No. 11 Downing street to No. 10—as a dream ticket for sport. Some dream—it has turned into a nightmare for many people in the world of sport. We need only point to the Minister's abject failure to produce his review of Government sports policy. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath pointed out in his comprehensive speech, the review has been in the offing for four years.

On 5 February, in a parliamentary written answer, the Minister told me that the review would be published in the summer. Both his inaccuracy in predicting matches and his statistical ineptitude have been clearly demonstrated tonight. We are nearing the end of the Year of Sport, and we are still none the wiser about the Government's proposals. That may not be strictly true; we have heard the next Government's proposals. They are contained in our charter for sport, which sets out a positive vision of what sport is, and what it can become, given the right backing from Government. A Labour Government will provide that backing.

Ours is an enabling ethos. The Minister resorted in desperation to well-worn scare stories about interfering Governments, as he has done before; but even he must know that our charter promises an environment that will

enable sportsmen and women to find their own level. That is why we shall involve spectators and participants in the decision-making process. That is why we shall provide more physical education teachers and establish a comprehensive national system of sports development officers to help everyone, from children to grandparents, to gain the opportunity to enjoy sport and leisure for themselves.

We have given unequivocal backing to teaching children to swim by the age of 11. We are happy that the Minister went along with that tonight, but it has taken him a long time to reach that conclusion. We expect him not just to wait for the survey to be completed but to recognise that in some areas he can act now, without resource implications. I have asked him repeatedly to carry out a survey of the lack of provision. Eventually—many months later—he agreed to do so. We are grateful, but it was rather late.

The encouragement and the backing of sport are the watchwords of our charter. That is why it has been greeted so positively in sporting circles. The Minister will have seen the reaction of the sports world to our proposals. It has been enthusiastic and welcoming.

The reason for that universal welcome among sports experts is that they know that, when Labour says that it will revitalise British sport, it means what it says. Unlike the Government, we have a record and a pedigree to back up our words. It is small wonder that the Minister is unwilling to unveil his product. He must know that it represents not so much his opus magnum as his epitaph. We provided the Minister with a platform to dispute that tonight and to enlighten us, but he failed to take advantage of that opportunity. My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath said with great clarity that, when we are returned to office, we shall be pioneering once more and give sport the lead that it so desperately needs.

Will the Minister match our commitment to introduce mandatory rating relief for all voluntary sports clubs? He has already said that he will not do so, which is disgraceful. It has already been introduced in Northern Ireland and has been very useful. Unfortunately, the Minister's praise for discretionary rate relief, in a written answer to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), suggests that he does not share our enthusiasm for mandatory rate relief. His view on that occasion was, in part, due to the results of a survey carried out by his colleagues in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office.

I wonder whether they provided the Minister with only half the story, as happened in the case of their written answer to me on 5 November. On that occasion, they told me about the total number of sports clubs that received rate relief in 1991, but what they refused to tell me—despite an explicit request in my written question, although I have since discovered the answer as a result of pressing other Departments—is that the survey showed that 1,136 voluntary sports clubs applied for rate relief in 1991 under the present system but were turned down.

What does the Minister have to say to those 1,136 sports clubs that were denied those vital financial resources? Does he think that discretionary rate relief has worked well for them? Can he explain why those applications were turned down? Did his Department keep him in the dark?

I hope that the Minister will tell the House what he plans to do to back Britain's attempts to bring international sporting events to Britain. If the Government's treatment of the world student games is anything to go by, the answer is precious little. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that he can enlarge on that point.

A sports-loving Government would be a driving force for sport. They would not cower in the stands, refusing to participate. The Prime Minister gave a cricket bat to President Bush at Kennebunkport. To do that is one thing; to come up with the goods for sport in this country is quite another.

In reality, as the whole of the sports world knows, Tory Governments have always trailed badly behind Labour Governments when it comes to sport. As the record shows, despite the Minister's fantasy allegations, it has always been the Labour party that has led the sporting pack. In the 1960s, it was a Labour Government who created the Sports Council and gave Britain its first Minister for Sport. In the 1970s, it was a Labour Government who led the way for British sport in Europe and who negotiated and signed the European sport-for-all charter.

Within the world community, by signing the Gleneagles agreement, a Labour Government established the boycott of sporting links with South Africa, on account of apartheid. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure that we carry the entire House with us on that. All too often, the Government have ignored the Gleneagles agreement in all but the letter of the law.

Celebrations alone are not enough. We need to improve Britain's sporting profile overseas, or we shall not maximise our potential as a host to top-class world sporting events. One step that the Government must take immediately is to put together a high-profile sports aid programme for the black townships in South Africa and for the front-line states whose sport has suffered as a result of the lack of international competition. Other European countries are doing just that. We should do it, too.

Labour has given a pledge in its charter for sport to back the international efforts of our sports stars, many of whom are our finest ambassadors. We recognise the major international role that sport plays in Britain, or could play if it was given the right backing by the Government, and we will play our full part in supporting that role. We appreciate that, by being seen to give support, Britain will make a vital contribution to Europe and international sport, as well as helping to promote a high world profile for British sport. The United Kingdom's work in the Council of Europe's committee for the development of sport and the British Olympic Committee would benefit enormously.

This year, in the Year of Sport, the launch of the Labour party's charter has shown that once again it is the Labour party in the 1990s that has the ideas, commitment, and, above all, the political will to bring a better deal for sport and secure a brighter future. The millions of sportsmen and women who are crying out for Government support know that they will not have to wait much longer for the backing that they so urgently need. After the next election, a Labour Government will put them back in the driving seat.

9.5 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I do not intend to follow the tub-thumping oratory of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who

[Mr. Michael Jopling]

sounded as if he was making a bid for the Opposition Front Bench. After the long-winded effort that we had to listen to earlier, I am surprised that he is not already there.

I do not need to tell the House that the Lake district is one of the favourite parts of the United Kingdom for sport and recreation. The House knows that thousands of people visit the Lake district every year to enjoy its marvellous scenery, and many come to enjoy sport and recreation on the lakes. They come to swim, fish and sail and for other forms of boating.

Hundreds of visitors and many local people enjoy the sport of power-boating, particularly on Lake Windermere. There are many facilities on that lake for the increasingly popular sport of water-skiing. To my knowledge, the Windermere Motor Boat Racing club has been in existence for more than 60 years, and there is a long history of world records being achieved on the lake.

For many years, there has been a growing need to apply proper controls to power-boating. We know that power boats can be dangerous, apart from the noise element which can be unattractive and intrusive. I remember moving amendments to the Countryside Bill in 1968, which eventually led to the registration of boats on Lake Windermere and some of the spead limits that now exist.

Windermere is the only lake in the Lake district on which power boats are allowed. In 1976, there was a public inquiry and power boats were banned from the three lakes of Ullswater, Coniston and Derwentwater, apart from rare exceptions. The inspector at that inquiry said that, in view of the recreation history of Windermere, it should be regarded as a place where fast power-boating and associated water-skiing should be allowed. That is what has happened.

However, power-boating as it exists on the lake is highly unsatisfactory, and there is an urgent need for new controls. Tragically, a child was killed only a few years ago. Stupid behaviour is too common, and it results in wholly unreasonable interference with other lake users. Proper standards of insurance and competence do not exist to the extent that they should, and the noise is occasionally far too intrusive. There is also a problem of people using power boats to water-ski early in the morning. That is wholly unreasonable.

About a year ago, the Lake District special planning board worked hard to find a way of amending the rules to restore a sensible approach to power boating on Lake Windermere. But earlier this year, it dropped a bombshell. Without warning, it decided to impose a 10 mph limit on the lake, which effectively killed all power-boating sport. Members and officials of the board did not conduct an inquiry to discover how many jobs, businesses and livelihoods around the lake depended on power boating. I do not know what the figure is, but it is clear that many jobs are affected. My principal concern about the effect of the speed limit is the loss of those jobs.

The Countryside Commission endorsed the board's surprise recommendation. I believe, however, that it is not too late to save many jobs and businesses by introducing sensible new rules to ensure that Lake Windermere is big enough to accommodate those who wish to enjoy it in their various ways. I am sure that, with good will, that can be done.

I am glad to be able to tell the House that a meeting was recently held of the major bodies that oppose the 10 mph ban. They included the Royal Yachting Association, the British Water Ski Association, the Sports Council, the Standing Conference for Northern Sport and Recreation and the British Marine Industries Federation. They agreed a package to put to the Lake District planning board as an alternative to the 10 mph limit. The proposals better to control activities on the lake are based on plans that officers of the planning board were working on until the surprising vote that imposed the 10 mph limit.

The proposals that have now been agreed by lake users develop the original proposals on which the board's officers were working. For instance, they would impose zoning on the lake to confine power boating to certain areas, and would introduce measures to control noise properly. They seek to control the time when power boats can be used. I recently heard that somebody was water ski-ing at 5 o'clock in the morning and disturbing people. That was wholly unreasonable, and the package of proposals would stop that. The purpose of the package is to eliminate the cowboy element who drive power boats on the lake, and who cause most of the trouble, and to give clubs more control over such sports.

The lake users' proposals contain a most important new suggestion for two substantial improved controls for the board that did not form part of the officers' original proposals. The first is that power boat drivers towing a water skier must hold the appropriate level of the Royal Yachting Association's national power boat certificate of competence. That licence could be withdrawn from offenders. Secondly, they have proposed the imposition of a 6 mph speed limit for all powered craft, except for those driven by persons who hold the appropriate level of the Royal Yachting Association's power boat certificate of competence.

The lake users believe that those measures will provide the board with significant additional controls designed to improve safety and to eliminate from the lake what I have described as the cowboy element. I am glad that the appropriate committee of the Lake District planning board agreed at today's meeting to consider those proposals seriously, and has deferred an endorsement of the 10 mph speed limit until a future meeting of the whole of the board in January.

In the meantime, I urge the Minister to do his best to encourage a sensible compromise in this difficult matter because many jobs are at stake. I am aware that he may tell us that, as a Minister, he has a potential judicial role but I am sure that he could use his good offices in the meantime. The new rules would demand more stringent enforcement of the rules on the lake. That would have to be accepted and paid for in licence fees by those who wish to continue to use power boats on the lake. It could be expensive, but I regard that as a small price to pay for sensible controls on the lake.

I shall be glad to discuss the issues sensibly with the planning board. I know that it is keen to introduce a private Bill in the near future and I am happy to discuss that with it. However, I hope that the Minister will use his good offices to try to ensure that the people who enjoy sports are not driven from the lake by what I regard as an unreasonable decision.

9.16 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I shall do my best to restrict my remarks in view of the many hon. Members who wish to speak. I shall not follow the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) into the subject of Lakes Windermere and Ullswater or any other attractive parts of his constituency.

None of us can ignore the fact that the level of sport in schools is disappointingly low. Making physical education a compulsory part of the curriculum—although welcome—is no substitute for the opportunities previously available to school children. It is not significant or, indeed, helpful to analyse how such circumstances have occurred. It is much more profitable to consider ways of remedying a situation generally regarded as unfortunate.

If it is no longer possible through the schools to interest young people in sport to the same extent, how else can we do so? One way, which would result inevitably in a substantial increase in participation, is the use of the network of local sports clubs and governing bodies in the United Kingdom. The provision of development officers for governing bodies and the provision of development officers in local sports clubs could make a substantial contribution to the alleviation of what is generally regarded as a problem.

I pause only to say that development—a word frequently used in the context of sport and recreation—is by definition a time-consuming occupation. It requires considerable expertise and people of particular talent and ability. Merely to talk about development does not mean, of course, that development will be achieved. Nevertheless, I believe that the existing network of local sports clubs and governing bodies is the best and most immediate way to remedy the defects in young people's participation in sport.

One requirement is for sports clubs to be healthy. One way in which the Government could assist in their health would be to end what I regard as the fiscal nonsense of local sports clubs having to pay corporation tax on any interest that they might acquire by putting their funds in deposit accounts. If they were granted that benefit, they would be able to use the money much more profitably and the treasurers of local sports clubs would also be absolved of the additional burden of trying to keep proper accounts.

We want better access to facilities and the Minister was right to recognise that there is all-party agreement that section 42 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 should be modified to permit much more dual use of educational facilities. When the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) appointed me to the Sports Council in 1965, the first meeting to which I went was concerned with dual use of education facilities. The principal obstacle was the fact that no one was willing to pay the overtime of the janitors. I suspect that in many cases that is still an obstacle. It makes one feel somewhat discouraged that we have not been able to overcome an obstacle which, on the face of it, appears to be capable of being overcome without much difficulty.

Another element is the provision of facilities. The truth is that only the local authorities have the financial muscle to provide the large-scale facilities necessary for sport and recreation. The Minister mentioned that he had visited Harrogate. I visited it earlier this year and was taken to see two swimming pools. One had recently been built to the most modern standards. The other pool was built approximately 20 years ago. The architecture is beginning to look dated but, more significantly, the nature of the provision made at that time is no longer appropriate to what is necessary in the 1990s. The upkeep of those premises has become a considerable drain. Many of the sports facilities that were built by local authorities in the past 20 years now desperately need replacing. Unless local authorities are given the funds or the permission to proceed to replace the facilities, we shall have a gradually depreciating stock of swimming pools, running tracks and sports halls.

One notable omission from the debate has been the fact that so many young women are lost to sport. The fallout rate between school and adulthood among the female population is much greater than among the male population. It must be an important part of Government policy to try to encourage young girls to continue with sporting and recreational activities. If the health of the nation is to be improved by sport and recreation, the health of the 52 per cent. of the nation represented by the female population is an important consideration.

We should not let this occasion pass without recognising, as has already been done to some extent, the extraordinary contribution that many schoolteachers make to sport in schools. I have fairly close links with the Scottish Schools Athletic Association. The secretary of that association is a schoolteacher and I reckon that he does 20 to 25 hours a week unpaid voluntary work to keep athletics in Scottish schools at the strength that it presently enjoys. Many people make a remarkable contribution and it is right that we should acknowledge it on occasions such as this.

It is true that the Government have funded the Sports Council for the ensuing year at the predicted rate of inflation. However, the chairman of the Sports Council was concerned that there was no opportunity for expansion. That may be why Mr. Yarranton, who could reasonably be described as being not one of nature's rebels, described what the Government had offered as a "kick in the teeth". As president of the Rugby Football Union, he may be better qualified than many to recognise a kick in the teeth. The previous Minister for the Arts was able to obtain three-year funding for the arts. Would not it be an important contribution to the development of sport in the United Kingdom to give the Sports Council a period over which it could plan its activities? I refer, of course, to the Sports Council not only in London, but in Scotland.

I look forward to the day when the Government publish their proposed legislation in relation to the protection of young people from the evils of anabolic steroids. Although the regime of testing has proved remarkably successful and effective, a whole population of people who use gymnasiums and who do not fall within that regime are undoubtedly subject to the temptation to use anabolic steroids. The Government will have to consider the need to deal with that problem in due course. All the anecdotal evidence that comes my way suggests that a considerable problem exists.

I am agnostic on the question of a national lottery. Some people in my party are enthusiastic about it, but as the whole basis of our legislation on gaming is to provide only sufficient facilities for gaming to meet an existing demand, there may be great legislative problems if in promoting a lottery there is any suggestion that interest in

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

gaming may be encouraged or advanced. That is a matter of principle which perhaps should be dealt with on another occasion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman managed to intervene at the beginning of the debate. Since then he must have had a pressing engagement outside. It would be unhelpful to other hon. Members if I gave way now.

Mr. Bottomley: I have been here from the beginning of the debate. If the hon. and learned Gentleman does not want to give way, I understand that, but I wish that he would not make other remarks.

Mr. Campbell: I must press on, because I want to deal with international events. By a strange stroke of good fortune, I failed by only one vote to be selected chairman of the company that ran the Commonwealth games in Edinburgh. Someone up there must have had my best interests at heart.

Anyone with any connection with the Commonwealth games in Edinburgh knows that the consequences of that financial debacle will be felt in Scotland for a long time. Anyone who knows of the difficulties through which Sheffield went before it could stage the world student games knows that cities will be reluctant to apply for such events.

I welcome what I hope was an open-minded statement by the Minister about the Government's attitude to Manchester. I have nothing but the highest regard for Bob Scott and the others who support him, but how much more likely Manchester would be to win the competition to host the Olympic games if it were shown that the Government supported the bid not only psychologically and emotionally but with real and substantial financial backing.

In Great Britain enterprises such as hosting international events look realistic only if they have proper Government backing. We have no Coca-Cola company in this country, as they have in Atlanta. Unless the Government are willing to open their cheque book, I fear that such enterprises are unlikely——

Mr. Atkins: How much?

Mr. Campbell: I have not seen the most recent figures. If it cost, say, £20 million or £30 million to bring the Olympic games to Manchester, I would regard that as an investment well worth making, not only for Manchester but for the United Kingdom as a whole.

On Monday I attended a seminar organised by the Sports Council in Scotland. The Minister of State responsible for sport in Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), preceded me there and addressed the delegates. It was clear that he had not satisfied them that the Government's position on sport was as suggested in the amendment tonight.

I suspect that if the Minister attended the annual conference of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, which is now taking place, he would not find that audience as receptive as his Back-Benchers have been to what he has said today. The public—the audience that the Government should satisfy about sport—are far from satisfied. The sportsmen and sportswomen of this country look to the Government for a much better deal.

9.29 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will forgive me if I do not follow him, except to inform him that I have been in Yeovil over the past two days. I suggest that he divert some of his energies there, with a view to trying to save his leader's seat, because the news that I get from that part of the world is that the Conservatives are going to regain that seat with a handsome majority.

I apologise to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) because, in our last debate on sport, I described his speech as valedictory. Some might say, having heard him tonight, that it was a pity that it was not, but it is nice to see him still in office.

One of the advantages of a debate such as this—and it would be churlish not to thank the Opposition for allowing us this debate—is that it enables us to see the prospective candidates for the Front Bench sitting like vultures behind the right hon. Gentleman waiting their turn. Inevitably, they are led by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who has been a long-term tryer in the field along with a number of other hon. Members with familiar faces. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), who is coming up fast on the rails and who may pre-empt them when the time comes, is missing. I should add that, when the time comes, the Labour party will not be in government but will again be in opposition.

Conservative Members rather resent the Opposition's pious attitude, based on the assumption that sport is their subject and that the Conservative party is not concerned with it. We have had five excellent Ministers in 12 years. The reason for that is that they have all put such energy into their task and have initiated so many varied policies that, from sheer exhaustion, they were bound to be moved on.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the present Minister for Sport, who has brought a freshness to the post and who has tremendous support throughout the sporting world. It is a blatant untruth to say that my hon. Friend does not have that support and that he is not welcome wherever he goes in pursuit of the excellent work that he is doing. The fact that we now have a Prime Minister who is passionately interested in sport, as he showed in his generosity to it as Chancellor of the Exchequer, has reinforced the view that the Government consider sport a high priority and will continue to do so after they are returned to office at the next general election.

Much has rightly been made of the somewhat hollow document produced by the Labour party some years ago. I have obtained a copy of Labour's "Charter for Sport", signed by someone who claims to be one of the authors —although that claim has not been confirmed by the other authors. That pretty document contains many expansive words. It is peppered with such phrases as "new energy", "new ideas", "promoting excellence" and "promoting achievement", and all of us would support those aims. But, typically for a Labour party policy document, it is long on rhetoric but contains very few new ideas. Moreover, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, the majority of the thrust of

the document has already been adopted by the Government anyway, so there is nothing really fresh about the rather hollow words contained in it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said in a succinct intervention, what the document omits is any form of costing. We do not know the shadow Chancellor's view of it, because he has not commented on it. Full as the document is of flannel, it is basically a blank cheque for sport. The right hon. Member for Small Heath and his hon. Friends have given us no indication this evening of costing. Most people who understand sport and take an interest in it will realise that the expense that the document implies is substantial. We have no guarantee—certainly the right hon. Gentleman has given us none—that a future Labour Chancellor could fund all these grand ideas.

My main argument with the document is that it is a document for administrators and bureaucrats rather than participants and players. It talks about the appointment of more sports development officers and about greater local council involvement. As the right hon. Member for Small Heath had something to do with the document, it is inevitably rather wordy, but its general tone is a scream for expenditure and interference by the Government. My hon. Friend the Minister is absolutely right to say that, even when he introduced the document, the right hon. Gentleman said that he wanted to see more ministerial influence.

The Opposition talk rather grandly about Government support for major sports, but the reason that sport in this country has been so successful in the past few years is that the various sports have learned to live on their own, to find their own resources and to use the money that is available to them from the taxpayer to the best advantage. I fear that, if the Labour party ever came to power and that Government money became available, such initiatives would fade away. That is why the document has rightly been dismissed by those who understand sport and who are perhaps looking to the Labour party for something more than simply empty rhetoric and borrowed phrases.

I should now like to touch briefly on two items of policy, both of which are dealt with in the document and motion. The first relates to playing fields. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that he had published a directive, which has been reinforced, stating that schools and education authorities should seriously consider disposing of school playing fields according to the needs of the area. I was delighted when he initiated the register of school playing fields because, as hon. Members will remember, I sought to introduce a Bill to that effect many years ago, but it did not find any favour then.

We must know how many school playing fields we have and whether they are available. Therefore, I urge my hon. Friend and the Government to bend over backwards to persuade the local authorities to preserve the playing fields. The empty rhetoric of the right hon. Member for Small Heath, who avoided the point about instructions to Labour councils, must be noted. He must know that, in Nottingham, school playing fields have been sold in direct opposition to the views of the local electorate. On the whole, such things have happened where Labour authorities have not followed that dictum or taken the Department's circular No. 909 to heart. At least there seems to be some consensus in the House now on this important matter, and I hope that that will continue.

I turn now to the basis of South Africa's return to international sport—*[Interruption.]* Well, I did not wish to disappoint Opposition Members, and especially not the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who I know has taken such a keen interest in this matter. The part of Labour's document that I applaud deals with this matter. However, as usual, the Labour party seems to be trying to take credit for the fact that South Africa is now back in the international fold. In fact, it was the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his influence on the Commonwealth countries that has led to South Africa's return to international sport.

The tragedy is that, if the Gleneagles declaration on sport, to give it its full title, had not been signed, and if Opposition Members had given more encouragement to the sports bodies in South Africa which were desperately trying to integrate and which had eradicated all forms of racism within their sport, but which were penalised by Opposition Members on the basis not of their own sins but of those of their politicians, South Africa would have returned to international sport much earlier. None the less, I welcome the Opposition's late conversion, because we all look forward to South Africa's participation in every international sport.

The Government have every reason to be proud of their record. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, we have made a substantial investment in sport, both through the Sports Council and in terms of local government expenditure. The numerous initiatives of previous Ministers, and especially that of my hon. Friend with his champion coaching scheme, have already borne fruit. The encouragement of private participation—on the basis that the Minister of Sport's job is to encourage and not necessarily to intervene directly himself—has been welcome and has led to our excellent sporting record during the past decade. With my hon. Friend in office, we can look forward to some exciting times and to some new initiatives and policies that will carry sport forward into the year 2000 in the excellent heart in which we find it today.

9.39 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Before I discuss the world student games in Sheffield, I ask the Minister to consider the terms of reference for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts as they relate to association football. There is a problem, because the terms of reference debar the foundation from supporting and financing association football. They refer association football to the Football Trust, but that deals with post-Taylor problems. The Sports Council has also expressed concern at the way in which the foundation is allocating the council's finance, which does not take cognisance of its strategic planning and the priority areas for sports development highlighted by it, after much consultation. I should be obliged if the Minister would send me a letter about that.

"There were almost as many adjectives as fireworks flying around the World Student Games closing ceremony at Don Valley Stadium—brilliant, fantastic, super, terrific. And more. But if I were asked for a one word, stone cold sober, after the event verdict on the Games and its associated festival, my word would be: unbelievable. Did it all really happen here in stolid, workaday Sheffield? In 40 years as a Sheffield journalist I have never seen anything bring the city

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

to life the way it was brought to life during the Games fortnight. Twenty years ago, ten years ago, even one year ago, I would not have believed it possible . . .

From beginning to end the whole spectacle engendered some kind of magic that pulled ordinary people along with it." That was the judgment of Peter Harvey, a reporter with the *Sheffield Star*, a newspaper not known for its constant support for the games. Nevertheless, it reflected the views of the vast majority of Sheffield.

We in Sheffield, with your support, Mr. Speaker, staged the world student games in July. It was the largest sporting event in the world this year and it was a huge success by any standard. It is right to put the finance behind the games into order. The Minister said that the Sports Council gave £3 million to the games. That is true. It gave that money for the purchase of equipment and that has now been dispersed to various areas in Yorkshire and throughout the United Kingdom. The construction of the new facilities had a capital cost of £147 million. It cost just over £20 million to run the games.

The people of Sheffield have rightly asked why, in 1987, the city of Sheffield made a bid for the world student games. By the middle of the 1980s we had lost 40,000 jobs from the steel and engineering industries and unemployment was at 15 per cent. In parts of my constituency the level of unemployment was in excess of 40 per cent. Demoralisation was inevitable, but by that time the city had gone into partnership with the private sector. It had already developed a strategy on how we could mangage the necessary change to bring Sheffield out of decline.

That change led to diversity in the economic industrial base so that the city had a higher profile. In turn, that led to a return in civic pride. We developed centres of excellence, in which the world student games played an important part. What has been the result? Inward investment into Sheffield from 1985 to 1991 has amounted to £2·5 billion. The Government will be interested to know that the ratio of public to private investment and the leverage factor is 1:3·5. That compares with any of the regeneration schemes.

An independent study by the university of Sheffield on the impact of that investment on employment prospects and the economy revealed an advantage in terms of job creation—6,500 jobs were created in Sheffield and more than 11,000 within the region. The Government should also note that each job has cost £4,000 less than those created by the construction-oriented initiatives around the country.

The new facilities are generating activity levels well beyond expectation. National and international events have been attracted to the new facilities at Sheffield, ranging from public cricket to international table tennis. The arena, which is part of the new complex, can house 12,000 people. It now stages sell-out concerts by top pop stars and philharmonic orchestras. The impact on the local economy, hotels, restaurants and other general services has been immense. That shows that a venue like the arena was necessary in the north of England. For example, of the 60,000 people who attended the Dire Straits concert held in the arena, 70 per cent. came from outside Sheffield, which shows the spending power now coming to Sheffield.

Sheffield is becoming one of the top sporting venues not only in Britain but in the world. The indoor arena to which I referred doubles as an ice rink. Its playing surface is versatile enough to be used for basketball and volleyball and this Sunday the Soviet gymnastics team will perform there. We have also developed an international standard tennis and netball centre and the Don Valley stadium is the first purpose-designed athletics stadium to be built in this country for many years. It is also the home of the Sheffield Eagles. It staged the McVities international match which attracted the largest athletics crowd in the United Kingdom since the 1950s. Again, that shows that people in the north of England enjoy their sport.

The Ponds Forge international swimming complex is the only swimming complex in the United Kingdom with a 50 m, 10-lane pool. It will host the 1993 European swimming championships. In technical and design terms, the complex is said to be the best in the world and our British craftsmen can be very proud of it.

Two other centres have been built and the Lyceum theatre has been refurbished. The cost of all those facilities was £147 million, which is less than was spent on the stadium that housed the football world cup final in Italy. Although the facilities have been built to the highest standards, they have been designed to produce the most flexible and adaptable facilities so that young and old, able and disabled, people can use them.

A few weeks ago I was privileged to watch disabled sports at Ponds Forge. I watched a young wheelchair-bound lad absailing, which is one of the activities for which the complex has been adapted for disabled children. The smile on his face showed that his achievement was as great as that felt by Roger Bannister when he broke the four-minute mile. We must consider such people and ensure that sport is accessible to all.

Those facilities have lifted not only Sheffield's profile but that of the United Kingdom. However, the Government provided not a penny of assistance for the Ponds Forge swimming complex. The Government should review their position and consider where they can provide assistance, because that would have an immense impact on the world swimming and diving scene. The Public Works Loan Board should be at least one avenue of support for funding those facilities.

We experienced some difficulties between 1987 and the opening ceremony in July this year. One or two people fell by the wayside, but one of our biggest problems was the lack of television coverage. Apart from Yorkshire Television and BBC North, both of which did an extremely good job, the lack of coverage cost us dearly in terms of our inability to attract sponsorship. The main television channel covering sporting events of that nature should question some of its strategic planning. In late 1990, "World in Action" wheeled out three disillusioned people to slag off and undermine the games. One of them was Mr. Peter Burns, the former chief executive of the games company, who was employed by that company in 1988-89 but sacked for incompetence. He had jointly been appointed by the private and public sectors: ordered 40 cars for the staff, and he had a flat in the City which was funded by the world student games. He then decided to decorate it at a cost of £25,000. That is why he got the sack. Those were the sort of undermining activities that television companies and programmes such as "World in Action" were conducting.

The world student games constituted the peg on which Sheffield hung the development of all the facilities. If someone had predicted the worst case scenario when Sheffield made its bid in 1987, it would have been realised

in 1991 when the games were staged. The city had begun to build £147 million worth of facilities with no Government support, no national television coverage and a mostly hostile press, when the country was in recession and local government finances were being savagely cut. However, Sheffield is a city with a vision and the partnership of public and private interests were determined to lift the city out of depression so that it could stage the biggest multi-sporting event in the world this year.

There were 6,000 participants from 110 countries and 7,000 volunteers at the games. The games were opened on 14 July by our patron, Princess Anne, who stuck with Sheffield through thick and thin and showed the way to promote sport. At the games 100 embassies were represented and seven Sports Ministers from around the world attended, with a considerable number of International Olympic Committee members and representatives of many sporting organisations from around the world.

I hope that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) will acknowledge that, for the first, time Namibia performed on the international stage and, for the first time, a united Germany put a team into a multi-sport event. But no senior Minister was present on 14 July. Ministers of Sport from around the world were asking why there were no British Sports Ministers or senior Ministers present at the opening ceremony.

Mr. Atkins: It was the British grand prix.

Mr. Caborn: That is the answer.

Half a million people went through the turnstiles, which is surely a record for British athletics and sport. The opening and closing ceremonies were sell-outs and 10,000 people watched the athletics each day. The biggest crowds ever watched the volleyball and basketball games and 3,000 people watched the swimming and diving event. More importantly, 6,000 young athletes—tomorrow's leaders and decision makers—returned to their respective 110 countries with a feeling of good will and warmth for the city of Sheffield and Britain.

To quote just one of many such quotes, a Lebanese delegate said:

"Without the World Student Games we would never have known the warmth and goodwill of the people of Britain."

That spells out the message.

The Police Federation magazine Police, has a lovely picture on its cover which shows what the games were all about: a police horse on which a young athlete is riding. The headline states "Policing the Forgotten Games". Inside, an article states:

"The 16th World Student Games . . . took place in July and to the surprise of many people outside the City of Sheffield, which hosted the event, they were a resounding success.

It is to the shame of the British media and the Government which virtually ignored the games (only sending the Minister of Sport at the last minute to the closing ceremony because Neil Kinnock was making his second visit there) and to the commercial sponsors who cold shouldered the occasion, that an opportunity to beat the drum for British sporting interests and organisation prowess was largely missed."

The article concluded:

"Having confounded the snide critics and Jeremiahs by staging perhaps the most outstanding sporting event ever held in Britain, (that includes the 1948 Olympics, the World Cup of 1966 and two Commonwealth Games) the forward thinking civic leaders of Sheffield may well be wondering What do we do for an encore?' Next time will the rest of Britain have the decency to take an interest?"

9.53 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): In the few concluding minutes of the debate I give my best wishes to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). This must be his last speech on sport in the House. In announcing his retirement he has left a long and costly demob note for one of his apprentices on the Back Benches to take over. I should be interested in hearing the comments of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on how the Labour party could finance what sounded like a false prospectus.

I shall speak about two issues and then give the Front-Bench spokesmen time to respond, unless of course they want to send us notes through the post. Hon. Members have spoken about school sport. About two decades ago, there was a great lack of competitive sport in schools. It was said that the Inner London education authority was one of the ringleaders in the campaign against competitive sport, but that was disputed by the right hon. Member for Small Heath.

In 1988, a Mr. Desmond Nuttall, the former head of research in ILEA, summed up the Labour attitude to competition when he said:

"You can't have a competitive system that condemns a large proportion to failure".

I can speak from personal experience of an outfit called the Inner-London Teachers Association. It said:

"The hidden curriculum of PE does more than its fair share to produce and reproduce the social and psychological basis necessary to sustain a system populated by ruthless captains of industry, technocrats and subservient proletarians."

That association wanted to stop all that. That was the position that Britain had reached on competitive sport.

I recently attended a major event during the health and fitness week organised by one of the emerging inner London education authorities. There were 1,000 children at the event which launched a campaign continuing throughout the year to introduce youngsters to new-image rugby, and it had the support of the Rugby Football Union. Next year, there will be swimming and sports hall athletics supported by governing bodies, and the summer term will feature cricket and field athletics. In that borough 1,000 children have been enthused. I am sure that it will not surprise the House to know that it is the London borough of Wandsworth. More power to its elbow. It is essential for children to participate in sport beyond that stage and the clubs must be prepared to welcome young people and to encourage them to continue with whatever sport they take up at school.

I am surprised that neither the Opposition motion nor that of my party has mentioned the very thing that would produce facilities and money for sport—a national lottery. That opportunity has been missed for a long time and it could produce £1·1 billion. At the moment, only England and Albania are missing the chance. If we do not introduce a lottery the 6 million letters a year coming to Britain from abroad asking us to pay for foreign lotteries will increase. It is disgraceful that we are not committed to such a lottery.

9.58 pm

Mr. Atkins: We have had a good and lengthy debate on a wide range of sports issues. Labour's charter for sport has been mentioned. As I said earlier, it is full of contradictions in relation to whether there should be more or less ministerial involvement. We have heard about Labour's inaction in contributing much to the House since I have been the Minister for Sport. As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said, Labour's charter is uncosted and we do not know what the shadow Treasury Minister thinks about it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) said, it is full of prejudices in relation to Cleveland and that is indicative of the support that Labour authorities do not give to sport. Above all, it is unashamed plagiarism of ideas that are now Government policy. We have demonstrated our commitment by money, by the inclusion of physical education in the national curriculum, by champion coaching and by what the Prime Minister and I have done for international sport.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) accused me of not being present at the opening of the world student games. I was at the British grand prix, which was attended by 150,000 people—somewhat more than there were in Sheffield. I made three visits to Sheffield and I am confident that the grand prix, which earns a lot of money for the country, has just as much importance as the student games.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 329.

Division No. 20] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cleiland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert

Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 67.

Division No. 21] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bellotti, David
Benton, Joseph
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*

Illsley, Eric
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Robertson, George
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Nicol
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the commitment of Her Majesty's Government to sport in the United Kingdom in the provision of grant to the Sports Council for 1992-93 of £48·8 million, which has been increased in line with forecast inflation next year, complemented by new funds of the order of £40 million this year from the Sports and Arts Foundation and the £20 million per annum additional money from the Football Trust, and a further £0·7 million for the Champion Coaching Scheme; recognises the important decision to make physical education a mandatory subject in the National Curriculum from the start of the next academic year and the lead given by Her Majesty's Government in international matters such as drug abuse and the participation of South Africa in international sport; and further believes that Her Majesty's Government has demonstrated its high priorities in the sporting field as opposed to the out-dated, uncosted, bureaucratic, interfering and irrelevant policies of Her Majesty's Opposition and its allies.

European Community Budget

[Relevant Document: European Community Document No. 5017/91 relating to revision of the financial perspective.]

10.26 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7184/91, relating to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1992, 7368/91, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 8442/91, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, the proposals described in the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 20th November 1991, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 7731/91, relating to the Draft Budget for 1992, 9092/91, relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget, the proposals described in the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 18th November 1991, relating to Council consideration of the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications and 8719/91, relating to revision of the Financial Perspective for 1992; and supports the Government's efforts to maintain budget discipline and ensure that the Financial Regulation is applied strictly.

I should like to begin this annual debate by expressing my thanks to the Scrutiny Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for its hard work in examining the eight bulky and voluminous documents that we are debating. The pace of the Community budget procedure is such that the Committee frequently has to scrutinise documents swiftly to ensure that the interests of the House are protected. I should like to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Newham, South and the Committee for the tolerance that they showed of the requirements and exigencies of the process.

The House debated the 1991 budget last December against the background of profound changes across the continent of Europe. Since then, those changes have gathered pace. In addition to the Government's preoccupation with the intergovernmental conferences, looming over the horizon is the review of the Community's finances, which is due next year. The budget is therefore the last under the five-year interinstitutional agreement of 1988.

I should stress, however, that neither any agreement that is reached in the intergovernmental conferences nor next year's review of the Community's finances will have any effect on the 1992 budget. Most of the key reforms that the Community agreed in 1988, setting the framework for future budgets and the budget for 1992, can be changed only by unanimity. They do not expire with the interinstitutional agreement.

Among those key reforms are the budget discipline decision, which includes the agricultural guideline—a legally binding limit that exerts downward pressure on the growth of agricultural support—and the own-resources decision, which sets firm legally binding limits on Community revenues and provides for the United Kingdom abatement.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My hon. Friend the Minister kindly referred to downward pressure on agricultural expenditure. By what percentage will that expenditure be down in 1992?

Mr. Maude: I referred to downward pressure on growth in agricultural support. As my hon. Friend knows very well, it is important to read the fine print. The point that my hon. Friend makes is that there is inexorable growth in agricultural spending, but I shall deal with that in a little while.

The developments beyond the Community's boundaries will have a great impact on the 1992 budget. We tend to focus particularly on the changes taking place in central and eastern Europe which have this year rolled on into the Soviet Union and beyond the boundaries of Europe itself. It is right that we focus on those changes in view of the profound and beneficial implications for world order.

However, the 1992 budget also contains substantial provision for the new Asia and Latin America programme which in part aims to foster change in those regions. The budget also reflects the greater need to make provision for emergency humanitarian food aid for the Soviet Union.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Annex B which is attached to my hon. Friend's helpful memorandum shows that the percentage increase in food aid for helping people in the world is minimal. It is absolutely disgraceful that, at the same time, there are massive increases in a wide range of other matters including not only agriculture but structural alterations, fisheries and so on, with figures ranging to an increase of 28 per cent. It is a disgraceful budget because there is no balance between what is required and what is being provided.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend needs no reminding that the budget process is by no means complete. There have been several shots at the budget—the Commission's initial preliminary draft budget, the Council's revision of it, the Parliament's amendments and the Council's rejection of most of the Parliament's amendments. There is still a process to go through in the elaborate minuet. I do not think that my hon. Friend will make the mistake of believing that the document to which he refers reflects the final state of the budget.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Before my hon. Friend moves on from help given to non-member countries, does not he find it disappointing that in the budget as drawn up at this juncture by the European Parliament there is no amount allowed for technical assistance to the USSR? Is not it generally agreed by all the expert advisers who visited the USSR in recent months that technical assistance should receive priority? Would I be unduly cynical in imagining that the European Parliament assumes that the Council of Ministers will attach priority to that issue and might increase the budget to allow for it? Is not that a nonsense? Should not it be making savings elsewhere in the budget to allow for that priority assistance to the USSR?

Mr. Maude: I shall deal with that point in more detail in a while, but my hon. Friend is right. Technical assistance to the Soviet Union is of the very greatest importance and, as he says, importance has been attached to it by all who have commented on the issue. I think that the European Parliament also attaches great importance to it and it is our view and that of the Budget Council that there is room within the budget for such assistance to the Soviet Union without breaching the financial criteria in the way in which my hon. Friend mentioned.

As for central and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the 1992 budget will see the continuation of a substantial programme to help with economic reconstruction—the Poland and Hungary assistance for economic restructuring programme—which now covers all central and eastern Europe. It aims to support the transformation of command economies into free and open economies. The draft budget makes provision—as my hon. Friend suggests—for the continuation of technical assistance to the Soviet Union as agreed by the European Council last December.

Another big issue is food aid for the Soviet Union. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as chairman of the G7 countries, agreed a 2 billion ecu package which was subsequently endorsed by the Community. A large part of that will be in the form of food credits intended to meet the food shortages expected this winter with dispersal conditional on genuine need being shown. The meeting of that need will not, therefore, add to expenditure in the 1992 budget.

Against that background, the key issue for the 1992 budget is how the Community should meet new external demands. In particular the question which both arms of the budgetary authority—the Council and the Parliament—have considered is the extent to which the demands can be met within the budgetary limits or whether they should be met with an increase in those limits.

As has been foreshadowed, the sharpest issue is how to make provision for technical assistance to the Soviet Union. It was clear at an early stage that that would be the key issue, when the Commission, the Council and the Parliament considered proposed revisions for the financial perspective for 1991 and 1992 earlier this year. The revisions were to take account especially of the consequences of the Gulf, technical assistance for the Soviet Union and humanitarian aid.

It may be helpful if I refer briefly to the interinstitutional agreement. It is a political agreement between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission which was reached in 1988. It sets out the institutions' agreement on how to approach their decisions about the Community's budget during 1988 to 1992. It includes what is known as the financial perspective. That is a set of expenditure ceilings for each of the six main categories of Community spending, which the three institutions agree to respect. The agreement has provided welcome stability to the Community budgetary process since 1989.

The agreement permits the financial perspective ceilings to be revised to cover unforeseen circumstances, but subject at all times to the binding legal framework. Above all, the legally binding limits on spending on agriculture and on the overall level of Community revenues cannot be overridden by the ITA and will continue beyond the currency of the present agreement.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Can my hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of the increase in VAT that is levied in the United Kingdom since the last budget, there will be a windfall gain to the European Community? Perhaps he would like to tell the House how much that represents. I appreciate that he may not have the figure at his fingertips, but perhaps it could be made available in due course.

Mr. Maude: I shall check that. It is my understanding that that is not the case. When the check has been made, I shall come back to my hon. Friend with a firm answer.

When the Commission presented its preliminary draft budget in June, it made it clear that there were provisions that it considered necessary, but which had not been included in the preliminary draft budget, pending consideration of its proposal for revision of the financial perspective ceilings, especially suitable provision for technical assistance to the Soviet Union, humanitarian aid and administrative costs. The PDB represented an increase in expenditure over the budget adopted for 1991 of about 11 per cent., totalling some 65·2 billion ecu, about £45·4 billion. Although it was a large increase, it was about 1·3 billion ecu within the overall ceiling of the financial perspective. Total provisions were equivalent to about 1·13 per cent. of Community GNP, compared with the 1·2 per cent. ceiling allowed under the own-resources decision of June 1988. That represented a cash margin of about 4 billion ecu.

There are reasons for this seemingly large increase in expenditure. First, the PDB provided for an increase of over 20 per cent. for the structural funds, reflecting the 1988 agreement that the funds should double in real terms between 1987 and 1993. Secondly, there was strong growth in existing policies as well as a need to provide for the new external policies that arose in the course of 1991. Thirdly, the projections for agriculture support indicate that spending will be at the guideline in 1992, rather than significantly below it as in 1991.

Spending on the common agricultural policy represents, as always, the major item in the budget. In recent years, there has been a substantial underspend against the guidelines, but that is not expected to continue into 1992. Indeed, expenditure in 1992 looked set, earlier on this year, to reach the guideline.

We strongly supported the Commission's proposals in the price-fixing negotiations earlier this year, which aimed to ensure that the 1992 guideline would be respected. The savings that resulted from those negotiations ensured that that will be so, and that the agricultural budget fully respects budget discipline. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not a chance."] My hon. Friends say, "Not a chance," but the financial perspective guidelines were not amended, even though 10 of the 12 member states wanted them amended, and the budget discipline decision taken in 1988, which many cynics and sceptics said would crumble as soon as it came under pressure, resisted the pressure on it and led to a tougher price-fixing settlement than would otherwise have been the case. That settlement may not be all that my hon. Friends would wish, but I can tell them that it is a great deal better than it would have been without the agreement that we reached in 1988.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I thank the Minister for his kind remarks about the work of the Scrutiny Committee. It has indeed been difficult to keep up with the flow of documents—some of them amending documents—the latest of which were placed in the Vote Office this afternoon.

From the point of view of the general public, the Minister is quite right. The table reproduced in our report shows that the guidance fund now stands at about £25,000 million a year. As the Minister said, that is just within the guidelines. Do he and his colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food expect a similar

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

arrangement for world prices in future years? At some time —the hon. Gentleman may be able to tell us in which year; it may be 1993—if the rearranged agricultural policy prices do not do what they are designed to do, we shall not only be above the agricultural guidelines. We shall be looking to the third arm of income, own resources, at that date or before. Is that a reasonable summary of the situation?

Mr. Maude: Obviously, further developments have to be taken into account, but any negotiation on prices has to take account of the requirements of budget discipline. I do not claim to be an expert on the operation of the stabliser regime, but I understand that it has an inbuilt mechanism to reduce prices when production is such that it would otherwise spill the demands on the budget over a certain level. I am not claiming that the regime is perfect or anything like it, but there are disciplines built into the system, which faced and withstood a severe test this year. The regime is by no means yet perfect, but it is very much better, and it has turned out to be more robust than many had expected.

The price-fixing negotiation consequences were taken into account in the Commission's first letter of amendment to its preliminary draft budget, making provision for agricultural spending in line with the guideline.

I should comment on the United Kingdom's abatement and on its net contribution to the budget. Revised forecasts will be included in the annual statement on the Community budget—to be published, as usual, early next year, following adoption of the budget—and financial year forecasts were published in the recent autumn statement.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I note that the motion on the Order Paper is to take note of the European budget and particularly of certain documents that are about three inches thick. If the House does not take note of the documents, what will be the practical effect? Will it mean that the budget falls? No, it will not. Has the matter been discussed by the European Parliament, and can the Minister explain to us where those responsible for the budget are held democratically accountable to the people of Britain? If it is in the European Parliament, surely Members of that Parliament should be discussing it—not hon. Members.

Mr. Maude: The European Parliament certainly does discuss it—exhaustively and painfully. It is one of the two arms of the budgetary authority, which consists of the Budget Council, on which I represent the United Kingdom and from which I return to this House to account for what I have agreed there, which I think is what I am doing now, and the European Parliament, which has a considerable influence on the budget procedure. I believe that the requirements of democracy are therefore being met in that process.

Reverting to the United Kingdom's net contribution, I can tell the House that our expectation is that the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget in 1992 would be about £2·25 billion, compared with around £2·5 billion in 1990 and £1·25 billion in 1991. The reason for the very substantial increase in 1992 over 1991 is essentially technical. The 1991 figure is artificially depressed by two factors. First, we expect a very substantial repayment next month, in respect of overpayments made in previous years, especially in 1990, reflecting the large figure of £2·5 billion in 1990 to which I have referred. Contributions in any particular year are based upon estimates of, for example, gross national product for the year in question; and any necessary adjustments are picked up in subsequent years.

Secondly, because the adjustment last year was a payment by the United Kingdom, we get the benefit in terms of additional abatement this year, 1991. This also depresses our net contribution. The figure for 1992—around £2·25 billion—is in line with the underlying trend of recent years.

As the House knows, our contribution would be very much higher if it were not for the abatement arrangement which my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) secured at Fontainebleau in 1984. That mechanism is established in legislation and cannot be changed without our agreement.

The current forecast is that our abatement next year will total some 2·5 billion ecu, or £1·75 billion. By the end of next year, the cumulative total for our abatements since Fontainebleau will be around £12·5 billion. In addition, there is the total of £3·2 billion that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley secured in abatements before the Fontainebleau arrangements—giving a total of £15·7 billion, which is a huge sum of money by any standards, which was saved for the taxpayer by those agreements and improvements on the arrangements that the last Labour Government so skilfully negotiated for this country.

The July Budget Council adopted a draft budget which was 35 million ecu above the Commission's proposals; a total little different, but with the contents significantly changed.

The Council's approach was to consider whether the Community's priorities could be met within existing budgetary ceilings and, in particular, to examine the scope for making proper provision for technical assistance to the Soviet Union and for emergency humanitarian aid, within the existing category 4 of the budget—other policies—ceiling of the financial perspective.

First, the apparent growth in category 4 expenditure, was relatively restrained. Because the 1991 base, for measuring growth, was artificially high the underlying growth was very strong indeed, some 15 per cent. between 1991 and 1992, if one were to set those special provisions to one side. On the face of it, therefore, there was scope for significant, but not damaging, reductions in the Commission's proposals.

Secondly, we had particular regard to the requirement which was introduced into the financial regulation last year—at the instigation of the United Kingdom. This requires the budgetary authority and the Commission to ensure the cost-effectiveness of budgetary provisions. The Council adopted a declaration on 25 July that its consideration of reductions in the Commission's proposals was, in large part, guided by value-for-money concerns. The Council concluded that significant reductions in the Commission's proposals were indeed possible and reallocated appropriations in category 4 of the financial perspective to include provision for the Soviet Union, aid to Eastern Europe, and emergency food and humanitarian aid. That reallocation to meet Community priorities was possible without a revision to the financial perspective.

The European Parliament's approach—the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle)—has been different. It believes that the new requirements, such as technical assistance for the Soviet

Union, should be met wholly by new money. It voted amendments and modifications adding more than 500 million ecu in commitments and payments to the draft budget. In addition to those amendments, the Parliament also wanted a global revision to the financial perspective to allow a further 1·66 billion ecu—more than £1 billion—of expenditure. Its intention was that this increase in the financial perspective ceilings would allow provision to be made for spending by the structural funds, over and above the agreed progress to its doubling; expenditure on central and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; humanitarian aid; tropical forests; and a reserve for administration.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On humanitarian aid, can we have an assurance that the United Kingdom representatives are not putting the brake on in the light of the reports from the Quakers, Frank Judd of Oxfam and the universities of Illinois and Harvard on humanitarian aid to southern Iraq? On tropical forests, will the United Kingdom Government cast a beady eye on what is happening to our aid to Guyana and its tropical forests?

Mr. Maude: I am afraid that I do not have the answers at my fingertips, but I shall provide the hon. Gentleman with a detailed response later.

The European Parliament did not include any provision for technical assistance to the Soviet Union. Instead, the Parliament used, for its own priorities, the available headroom of 50 million ecu in non-compulsory expenditure in category 4, plus 421 million ecu allocated by the Council for the Soviet Union and for aid. In effect, the Parliament took the money that was allocated by the council and used it for its own different purposes.

In addition, the European Parliament adopted two significant changes to the expenditure on research. Provisions in the draft budget reflected legislative provisions for this expenditure, and spending in this category was more than 400 million ecu below the financial perspective ceiling as a result. The first of the Parliament's amendments was to breach the amounts deemed necessary, that is the expenditure ceiling contained in the relevant Council decision, for the second framework programme, by 44 million ecu and that of the third framework programme by 220 million ecu. The second was to propose a range of increases to non-framework programmes, including a series of new pilot projects outside the framework programmes, totalling 170 million ecu.

Our Budget Council's meeting on 12 November followed the decision of ECOFIN the previous day not to accept the Commission's proposals for a revision of the financial perspective. The Commission's proposal comprises a revision of 720 million ecu in category 4 to cover technical assistance to the Soviet Union and to create a reserve for humanitarian aid to the extent of 300 million ecu. It also proposed a switch of 80 million ecu between the sub-ceilings in category 5. ECOFIN could not conclude that such revisions were justified.

The Budget Council in July had made it very clear that the requirements should and could be met within existing ceilings. Accordingly, the Budget Council earlier this month adopted a second reading draft budget broadly in line with its first reading.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): First, may I congratulate my hon. Friend on representing the British Government and Parliament at ECOFIN and on seeking to cut expenditure to the original Council proposal?

Does my hon. Friend agree that it is outrageous that the European Parliament proposes to increase expenditure when it has no responsibility for raising the taxes necessary to meet that budget? How can a Parliament be put in an irresponsible position, and therefore an undemocratic one, by pressing for expenditure to be increased while not having the responsibility to raise taxes to meet that expenditure?

Mr. Maude: Since the European Community's inception in 1958, the European Parliament has been one of two parts of the budgetary authority. We have learnt to live with it—not always amicably—and have established a modus vivendi with the Budget Council and the Parliament, each of which has its position, and discussions take place. Democratic accountability exists in both arms of the budgetary authority. The European Parliament, when faced with choices—making a budget with taxpayers' money invariably involves making a choice between difficult and often equally attractive options—tends to avoid making a decision. The only choice that it tends to make is to put its hands into the taxpayer's pocket, which does not seem to be the right approach.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Why did the Government consider that it was in order to increase the financial perspective in relation to assistance to eastern Europe and the Gulf states last year, but that it is not all right to do so this year in relation to the Soviet Union?

Mr. Maude: Because this year we took the view that there is ample room within the existing ceilings to provide that money. The Parliament has used up all the existing headroom in that ceiling for new and separate purposes. Judgments must be made and last year we judged that there was not room within those ceilings, so an adjustment in the financial perspective was justified. We do not believe that it is justified this year.

The Council also rejected all but two of the Parliament's amendments on research. It adopted a statement which I proposed, making clear to the Parliament that its proposals on research were wholly unacceptable, being contrary to treaty provisions, involving significant expenditure without a legal base, and effectively arrogating legislative authority to the Parliament.

The Commission's letters of amendment were also considered at the Council's second reading. A major element of the second letter was a proposal for new Commission posts—a revised budgetary provision which reflected the Commission's proposal for a revision of the relevant category of the financial perspective ceiling. The proposal for new Commission posts was considered in parallel with the Parliament's amendments to administrative expenditure. We accepted a Parliament amendment that covered appropriations to allow a further 327 Commission staff, requiring no revision to the financial perspective. We made clear our preference, shared by other member states, that a significant number of external posts should be created from that extra provision, reflecting the new external demands on the Community. The Council

[Mr. Maude]

incorporated the proposals included in the third letter of amendment, including budgetising the 1991 surplus of 938 million ecu.

The Council made it quite clear at both its first and second readings that adequate provision can be made for Community priorities, while maintaining provision for other policies. However, it also recognises that demands on the budget, particularly in the area of aid, have not diminished. Provisions for internal Community policies have, therefore, been restrained.

It will now be necessary for the presidency to examine with the European Parliament how the 1992 Budget can be adopted to ensure a proper balance between the Community's internal and external policies, within the framework of budget discipline.

The negotiations on the budget and on the financial perspective are at a delicate stage and I hope that the House will understand if I make no forecast of their outcome. We shall look for a satisfactory response from the European Parliament on research expenditure, because its proposals on that subject raise important principles of legislative and budgetary principle. We shall also seek to ensure that the Community's priorities are respected. That will definitely include making proper provision for technical assistance to the Soviet Union. We have shown that such a provision can be accommodated without damaging the general development of Community expenditure. I hope that the Parliament will reappraise its approach and accept the responsibilities placed on the budgetary authority. That means that we have to make choices as new demands and priorities emerge, not just make the choice that the Parliament tends to make, which is simply to spend more and thus take more from taxpayers' pockets.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): I find it disturbing that my hon. Friend says that the European Parliament, far from exercising a restraining influence on the budget, actually puts extra pressure on it. Am I right in thinking that the only organisation that acts as a restraint on budgetary expenditure is the Council of Ministers? I do not find that reassuring, particularly as most of the Community members are net recipients of Community expenditure.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that the main constraint on the Community budget is the Council of Ministers. It is certainly right that most of the member states are net recipients. There are thought to be three net contributors to the budget: Germany and Britain, which have always been so, and France, which is now a net contributor, probably a considerable one. Therefore, three of the four largest member states of the Community have a considerable interest in restraining spending. The other two countries have a greater interest in doing so than we have as any increases in spending are abated by about two thirds for us due to the Fontainebleau abatement. There is substantial pressure to restrain spending.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend recall that there is a strong possibility that by the end of the century Germany's gross national product could be as much as $2 trillion? Against that background, taking into account the percentage that would be contributed by Germany to the Community budget then, the important discussions that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is having with Chancellor Kohl today and what my hon. Friend the Minister has just said about maintaining choices, does my hon. Friend agree that that cumulative point would be a good reason for ensuring that we do not allow a central bank to take away those choices from the British people? If we did, there would be too much control in the hands of any one country.

Mr. Maude: I am not sure that there is any suggestion of a single bank taking those choices away. Such decisions will always have to be made by the Council of Ministers. We regret that the Commission does not place a greater restraint on spending. At the intergovernmental conference we made some important proposals that sought to introduce much greater financial accountability, including a requirement that, before the Commission makes a proposal, it should certify—preferably through one Commissioner with responsibility for the budget—that the proposal can be accommodated within budget discipline. We are making progress with that proposal and we are seeking to introduce additional disciplines into the system.

The budget procedure is always fairly complex, and this year has been no exception. Our aims are quite clear. We have sought to ensure that financial prudence and expenditure control are the key pillars to the budgetary process. The developments in Germany, the Gulf and Eastern Europe last year, and the events in recent months in the Soviet Union, cannot be used to reduce the Government's commitment, which I stress is shared by others in the Community, not to relax discipline. Once again, the Council has been able to tread the tightrope with some skill, producing a draft budget which is consistent with the principle of budget discipline. I commend that approach to the House.

11.4 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Financial Secretary's most interesting comment was that the budget-making process that we are debating meets the requirements of democracy. I disagree. Every year, I complain about the inadequacy and lack of democracy in the process. We have an hour and a half late at night in which to scrutinise everything that our Ministers have been up to in the Council of Ministers and to consider the proposals in a substantial set of documents dealing with a large sum of money.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I agree with my hon. Friend's criticism. Are things any different in any of the other 11 national legislatures? Are some of them more rigorous in their scrutiny of such measures, or is scrutiny even worse than in this place?

Mr. Smith: I suspect that some are better and that some are considerably worse. The process by which we are expected to call Ministers to account is not up to a proper democratic standard.

Sir Teddy Taylor: May we take it from the hon. Gentleman's quite splendid criticisms in the name of democracy that a Labour Government would give adequate time for such discussions?

Mr. Smith: I can certainly assure the hon. Gentleman that, when Labour takes office in a few months, we shall ensure that Ministers are fully accountable to the House and that adequate time is made available for that.

Mr. Maude: How would a Labour Government change procedures?

Mr. Smith: The Government made a small change last year when we started our debate on the European Community budget at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I am surprised that the keenness to have a slightly longer debate at a more reasonable time has apparently not been carried over to this year. There is a small improvement, in that Treasury memoranda are becoming rather more helpful and somewhat easier to understand. Even so, the pile of documents before the House are still very complex, and difficult to co-ordinate. There is scope for further improvement in the Treasury advice to which we are entitled.

I have four basic points about the budget, the first of which, although small, is important. The conversion rate used throughout the documents is £1 to 1·435 ecu. Does that rate assume that the pound is at its central rate against the deutschmark within the exchange rate mechanism? I believe that that is the case. The central rate against the deutschmark is 2·95, and the pound is hovering at around 2·85. Inevitably, that means that the conversion into pounds will be more expensive than it would otherwise be. What is the difference represented by the conversion rate?

Secondly, the Financial Secretary referred to the level of funds proposed for agricultural support. The commitment figure for this year is 32·516 billion ecu, and that for 1992 is 36·008 billion ecu, including the 1 billion ecu of monetary reserve. That represents a substantial increase of 10·7 per cent., and that is the figure sought by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who rightly picked up the Minister's comment on downward growth. There is no evidence of downward pressure either in the agricultural support heading or in growth. In the past couple of years, the share of the Community budget taken by agricultural support was apparently reducing, but it is now rising again.

The explanation offered by the Council for this phenomenon makes interesting reading. In its explanatory memorandum, it says:

"the increase in agricultural expenditure . . . is the result of a number of unfavourable factors, in particular the considerable fall in the US-Dollar/ECU ratio, the worsening of world prices in certain products (especially cereals, sugar, and beef and veal) and"——

here is the key to the problem——

"the structural imbalance (over-production) in the Community in the case of certain products".

There we have, in a nutshell, the entire problem of the common agricultural policy. It encourages over-production, and in the process helps neither the farmers nor the consumers of the Community. Rather less than 40 per cent. of the agricultural support fund actually ends up in the pockets of farmers.

A radical overhaul of the CAP is needed, and it would have been helpful if the Government had told us rather more about what they are doing, if anything, to ensure that that radical overhaul takes place.

Mr. Maude: We have been pressing for it.

Mr. Smith: Judging by the budget before us, they do not appear to have been particularly successful.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman upbraids us for not having succeeded in securing radical reform of the CAP. He knows as well as any other hon. Member that the United Kingdom, alone for much of the time, has been pressing for that. The resistance to it comes from those fellow member states to whom the hon. Gentleman, in another context, would like to hand very much more British power.

Mr. Smith: I shall ignore the final part of what the Financial Secretary said, because it is untrue. Not only have the British Government been studying this, but the much-maligned European Parliament has, in its comments on the budget, been rather more vigorous than the Government or the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers insists on a 1·11 per cent. across-the-board cut in the amount that is scheduled for agricultural support. On the other hand, the European Parliament has suggested that, instead of taking an across-the-board cut, the cuts in the agricultural support budget should be better targeted. It has especially argued that they should be targeted to "encourage projects which may play a role in the reform of the CAP".

We must ask why, given the opportunity to ensure that a reduction in the agricultural support figures in order to fit the figure within the financial perspective had to take place, the Government appear to have gone along with an across-the-board cut and have not used that opportunity to propose, as the Parliament has proposed, cuts which could assist the process of reform.

The third point that I want to address is the dispute that has emerged between the Council and Parliament over technical assistance to the Soviet Union. No one on either side of the argument is disputing the need and appropriateness of such assistance. A figure of some 400 million ecu is being proposed. That follows a commitment entered into back in January by the Foreign Ministers of the Community.

But in refusing to agree to an amendent to the financial perspective of some 300 million ecu, the Council of Ministers is not prepared to vote the funds for its decision. Although it was perfectly prepared to revise the financial perspective last year for eastern Europe and the Gulf states, it refuses to consider revising the financial perspective this year, despite the fact that, even if the present mechanism of the financial perspective for category four were to be increased, as proposed by the Commission, the total budget would still be substantially within the own resources ceiling, which is the ceiling which most matters.

The Council is also refusing to agree to such an amendment despite the fact that a carry-over of 938 million ecu from this year is being proposed by the Council —effectively an underspend on this year's budget—and some of that funding could be applied to the aid for the Soviet Union. The net effect of the refusal to amend the financial perspective is that the funds which will be earmarked for the Soviet Union will not be available for other priorities within that category.

Among the proposals from the Commission in category four are the extremely important items of aid to the third world. The Council of Ministers and the British Government are effectively saying that aid for the Soviet Union must be at the expense of aid for the third world. That is not a principle which the Opposition can accept.

Fourthly, there is the continuing issue, to which, sadly, the Financial Secretary did not allude, of additionality, especially the Government's attitude to the RECHAR programme. European Community funds are desperately needed, especially by areas suffering from the effects of pit

[Mr. Smith]

closures. The problem was highlighted in the recent Hemsworth by-election, and I know that my hon. Friend the new and excellent Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) has been pursuing it ever since his election. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has also followed it up assiduously.

The problem arises because European Community Council regulation 2052/88 requires the additional structural funds to have a

"genuine additional economic impact in the regions concerned."

That regulation was agreed to by the current United Kingdom Government; but, in the view of the European Commission, they are failing the "additional impact" test in practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow has pursued the issue with remarkable tenacity, as is his wont. He received a letter from the Foreign Secretary, dated 11 November, which stated very clearly what the Government were up to. At least the Foreign Secretary has the honesty to admit that. He wrote:

"We therefore take account of expected aggregate receipts from the EC funds in planning our public expenditure."

Effectively, the Foreign Secretary was admitting that the Government reduce Treasury expenditure on the ground that money is coming in from the European Community.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): The same applies to areas that qualify under objective 2 of the European social fund. In Strathclyde, courses are organised for the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill and women who want to return to work. The money that is provided is not a supplement to the funds that could provide the services that are needed; it is a substitute for those funds.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The root cause of the problem is the Government's insistence that they alone should determine what funds are available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow pursued the matter further. He received a letter from the Prime Minister, dated 12 November, and another from the Secretary of State for Energy, dated 21 November. The word processors at No. 10 Downing street must be linked to the same computer as those of the Department of Energy, for the wording of the two letters was identical. The Prime Minister's, however, added a little coda. After explaining, in a somewhat specious fashion, the Government's view on the question of additionality, the letter concluded:

"The Commission are misrepresenting the position"—

we do not agree; it seems to us that the Commission is representing the position very accurately, and that it is the Government who are misrepresenting it—

"and pursuing radical suggestions for changes in the UK public expenditure control system. We do not accept that they have any basis for this attitude."

Here comes the prize sentence:

"I hope that you"—

referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow—

"will use your influence with Bruce Millan to help us unblock this problem and get the grants released."

I admire the skills and persuasiveness of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, but it is absolutely ridiculous for the Prime Minister of this country to say that, because the Government have a disagreement with the European Commission, they want my hon. Friend to help to sort the matter out. The Government ought to recognise that their interpretation is wrong and that Bruce Millan is right.

Mr. Maude: The Government have gone to a great deal of trouble to explain to Commissioner Millan and his staff exactly how the system works. The Commission did not properly understand how our system worked. Now it understands it a bit better.

The effect of our public spending totals, taking into account receipts from Community funds, is that levels of spending are higher than they would otherwise be. Thus, both the letter and the spirit of the additionality requirement are met. The only conclusion that we can draw is that, having had it all explained to him at dictation speed, Commissioner Millan has taken a personal decision, for party political reasons, to frustrate the release of these funds to areas of this country, including my constituency, that need that money, in order to force a confrontation with the Government. Instead of coming here and whining on about it, I think that Labour Members should talk to Commissioner Millan. He alone has the ability to release this money.

Mr. Smith: The Financial Secretary is talking a load of nonsense. I had expected better of him—but never mind.

Mr. Dalyell: We have talked at length to Commissioner Millan, and we are absolutely persuaded that he is right and that the Government are wrong. I say that as a Member of this House.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government are coming dangerously close to echoing the words of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), who is unable to be with us tonight but with whom I have discussed the matter. He said:

"I believe that Commissioner Millan is the man who is being thoroughly boody-minded."—[*Official Report*, 15 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 277.]

That was not only discourteous; it was a completely erroneous portrayal of the situation. It is about time the Government realised that they—not Commissioner Millan, not the European Commission—are depriving the most needy areas of this country of money that is rightfully due to them.

Dr. Godman: It is not Commissioner Millan who is being bloody-minded over the distribution of funds under the Renaval programme but Scottish Office Minsters and officials. The fact is that 20 million ecu has been promised to my constituency and the parliamentary constituency of Govan—both declining shipbuilding areas. It is the Scottish Office that is holding up that money, not Commissioner Bruce Millan. It is Scottish Office Ministers who, in their obduracy, are being bloody-minded.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend makes the point graphically. What is happening on the ground shows that the Government are clearly at fault, and that they are completely wrong about the issue.

We remain unhappy about the budget proposals relating to agriculture, aid to the Soviet Union, additionality and the RECHAR programme.

Mr. McMaster: Before my hon. Friend moves too far away from the subject of addionality, does he agree that it is important to place on record that Commissioner Millan is not saying that those areas should not receive the

money? In fact, he said that they should have twice the amount of money. That is the key to additionality. Can my hon. Friend tell me how isolated the Government are on the issue of additionality?

Mr. Smith: As far as I am aware, the Government are alone on the issue. It means that British people in constituencies such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) are losing in a way that people elsewhere in the Community are not. They are losing directly as a result of the bloody-mindedness not of the Commission or Bruce Millan but of the Government.

There are definite areas within the Budget where the Government need to change their approach and their practice. It is not our intention to divide the House, because the broad thrust of the budget is acceptable. However, the Government should not allow that to fool them into thinking that we are happy with what they have been up to or what it appears that they intend to be up to, according to the Financial Secretary's remarks, during the remaining weeks of discussion on the budget.

11.31 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I do not intend to take up much of the House's time. I remember taking part in a similar debate on a previous occasion. I called that debate a charade and I see no reason to change my mind about this one. It does not matter whether one is a Euro-sceptic or a Euro-enthusiast. If we are to be called upon to consider a budget for anything, but particularly the European Community, it is utterly disgraceful that we are given an hour and a half late in the evening to do so. Both Front-Bench spokesmen have taken over an hour to deploy their cases and very little time is left for the rest of us. I have noticed that many of my colleagues on both sides of the Chamber have made gallant attempts to make interventions—good interventions—but they are not worth a hill of beans when considering a budget the size of this one. This is an utter disgrace.

The Select Committee on European Legislation—to which we should pay a certain tribute—said that the budget raises questions of political importance. My golly, that has not been reflected in the amount of time that we have been given to debate it.

We are discussing a take-note motion. What does that mean? Does it mean that I as a Back-Bencher, or the House collectively, has any right of veto over the budget? Of course not. Therefore, if one has no meaningful input into a budget or anything else, I fail to understand why we should consider it in the first place.

I associate myself with those who have talked of the indigestibility of the documentation that we are supposed to consider. It is voluminous and incapable of being read properly. It was not available to me on Monday. I am not getting at the Financial Secretary as an individual, because I think that he is one of the best Ministers in the Government—I would not say that if I did not believe it —but I must tell him that, in addition to extra time, the documentation must be simplified. It is incapable of being properly read or evaluated with the resources available to Back Benchers.

My second plea is for documents to highlight value for money. If we make a net contribution to a budget, whatever it is, as an hon. Member I wish to be assured that we are getting value for money. I do not believe that we are getting value for money and I shall give my hon. Friend the Minister three examples.

I am what would be called a Euro-sceptic. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke of nooks and crannies. Given the number and nature of items in the budget, it covers more than nooks and crannies.

My hon. Friend the Minister will have to convince me about three items of the budget, the first of which is the internal market. I think that the internal market is "a good thing". It will be good for the United Kingdom and for the rest of the European Community. I have no doubt about that, but my hon. Friend and I know perfectly well that it will not be in place on 1 January 1993 or for a long time after. Will he therefore tell me how the budgetary item for the European Community will facilitate the achievement of the internal market? If it will not achieve that within a reasonable period, why are we bothering to spend the money? I should like an answer to that question.

The budget is riddled with references to something called the social dimension. My hon. Friend the Minister knows perfectly well that Conservative Members reject the European Community's concept of a social dimension. He knows that by that I mean the proposed directives on working time, on the protection of pregnant women at work, on part-time work and on temporary work. He and I know perfectly well that, if accepted, they would only create unemployment. Therefore, perhaps he will tell me why we contribute to the evolution of those directives, albeit that in the Council of Ministers we shall no doubt try our best to ameliorate them. If he cannot explain that, I fail to understand why we spend the money.

Thirdly, I know perfectly well why structural funds are being increased—I can read as well anybody else—but that is not the question that we should be answering. We have learnt that regional policy does not work. If one took the map of assisted areas for 1932 and superimposed the current areas, they would be almost precisely the same. That is why the Government, rightly, have been looking for new ideas for regional policy. I remain to be convinced that the European Community is doing so. In fact, I know that it is not. It is spending money on the same old measures that have not worked in the past 50 or 60 years. I must again ask my hon. Friend the Minister why the United Kingdom is contributing to something that essentially does not work and is merely a temporary palliative.

I have much more to say, but in fairness to other hon. Members who wish to speak I shall throw away the rest of my notes. I doubt very much whether I shall take part in this again because it is just a damned disgrace.

11.38 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Only about 16 minutes of the debate are left, so rather than follow the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) or speak for any length, I shall, first, agree 100 per cent. with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's speech. In the two-day debate on Maastricht last week, hon. Members went on about the importance of the House's sovereignty and how it would be taken away if the proposals before the intergovernmental conferences were passed.

Here we are, late at night, discussing what has already been fixed. We can do nothing about it. This is nothing

[Sir Russell Johnston]

other than an opportunity for a variety of political insomniacs to fill the night air with wind and generalities. The debate will have no effect, so it is ridiculous.

In the short time available, I shall make three points. I do not agree with the Minister that it was a good thing for the Council to cut back as it has. Unlike the hon. Member for Beverley, I was impressed by the proposals in the European Parliament's amendments. It seems that the Council has effectively cut back on a variety of desirable activities. It has cut the money allocated to research and development, to educational projects—including those linked to the channel tunnel—and to the fisheries research programme which is directly and importantly linked to Scotland. It has not said whether it would be willing to extend, for example, the Perifra programme which, during its year of operation, has proved of great value to the peripheral regions of the Community. The programmes suggested by the Parliament were worthy of support and did not breach the financial perspectives. Indeed, as I understand it, they were considerably beneath them. Since 1988 the European Community has spent or required 35 billion ecu less than the agreed ceiling and the revision requested for the 1992 budget was only 720 million.

I conclude by asking what is the Government's attitude to the Perifra programme? Do they believe that it should be extended?

I also wish to associate myself with all that the Labour party's Front-Bench spokesman said about additionality, although I must say, en passant, that the rules that the Government are following are those followed by the previous Labour Government. This is not a new issue, but it is certainly one that we should sort out properly.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. A number of hon. Members have complained about the inadequacy of the time given to this debate. I refer you to Standing Order No. 14, which states, inter alia:

"Mr. Speaker shall put any questions necessary to dispose of such proceedings not later than half-past eleven o'clock or one and a half hours after the commencement of those proceedings, whichever is the later:

Provided that, if Mr. Speaker shall be of opinion that, because of the importance of the subject matter of the motion, the time for debate has not been adequate, he shall, instead of putting the question as aforesaid, interrupt the business, and the debate shall stand adjourned till the next sitting".

May I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to give serious consideration to adjourning the debate at 11.56 pm until the next sitting?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am aware of the Standing Order to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I am not of a mind to adjourn the debate. While I am on my feet, may I say that it is not for the Chair to determine the length of time allocated to such debates. However, I very much regret the great length of time taken by Members on the Front Bench in such a short debate. It is done only at the expense of Back-Benchers, who have a right to be heard.

11.44 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am sure that the whole House agrees with what you have said, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is an insult to taxpayers and democracy that the proposed expenditure of vast sums and substantial quantities of facts and figures should be considered in a debate of one-and-a-half hours, in which half an hour is made available to Back-Bench Members.

I want to ask many questions. I want to have details of the European centre for global independence and solidarity, which is spending a vast amount of money. It seems that it has been set up in Lisbon and that it is of importance for the development of solidarity. That is all that we have been told about it. I do not know what the centre is and I should like to know. I should like to know why there are vast entertainment allowances for the Commissioners. I would love to know why £1 million a year is spent on newspapers. I should dearly like to know the details of expenditure on uniforms. Of course, these questions are irrelevant. There seem to be a massive number of secretaries in the European Parliament.

I have hundreds of questions but I shall ask only a few because of the shortage of time. Why does the Minister try to pretend that spending on agriculture will be secured when we know from previous occasions that this is always accompanied by an accountancy fiddle? Surely my hon. Friend of all people knows that there is no possible way in which expenditure on the common agricultural policy can be maintained.

I make two suggestions to my hon. Friend the Minister. First, he will see that there is the possibility of a new attendancy fiddle. I am sure that he is well aware that, despite all the assurances of strict budgetary controls, there was the fiddle of the metric year of 10 months with 12 months' income and 10 months' expenditure. The Council of Finance Ministers refused even to consider the matter, although we knew that there was a fiddle. We knew that it was illegal. If any company director had adopted the policy, he would have been imprisoned.

There is a new proposal before us. I never knew that the Commission could determine what it regarded as the appropriate rate of inflation. However, it is all set out for us. There are three new considerations whereby expenditure has been increased substantially because the Commission feels that that is needed to offset inflation. In fact, the inflation percentage has been determined by the Commission, and there we see possible fiddle No. 1.

We see also that expenditure on agriculture continues to increase and the reasons are set out. The Commission has said that it regards the budget as a transitional measure pending the planned reform of the CAP, which it thinks should begin to bear fruit in 1993. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister also to consider the way in which figures have been changed because it is thought that there are opportunities for expenditure elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Minister says that things are under control and that expenditure is being contained, but we always discover that the figures prove to be bogus and that the accountancy of the EEC is a disgrace to organised democracy.

Why do Ministers always say that there is control and containment when the figures show the opposite? Why does my hon. Friend the Minister talk about containment when, according to my estimate, the total budget—that, of course, is bogus—is increasing by 10·6 per cent?

I agree fundamentally with what you so clearly said, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that the message will get through from the House that we regard the present procedure as an insult to democracy. It is a scandal—it is shameful—that the Government should allow only one-and-a-half hours for such a debate, especially when

the Front-Bench spokesmen take an hour for themselves. That makes us feel that it would be infinitely better if we did not debate the budget. If we are to be offered a debate of this sort, let us have no debate at all.

11.48 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I understand that the Financial Secretary wishes to spend three or four minutes replying to the debate, so only three minutes are available to me. I make no apology for raising the point of order earlier. We have seen a disgraceful abuse of the role of the Back-Bench Member. I agreed with the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) when he queried whether there was any point in having such an inadequate debate. I wanted to talk about the common agricultural policy and the budgeting for the common fisheries policy. I wanted to advocate how sensible budgeting could help us to develop a more efficient management of our fishery resources, a matter that concerns hon. Members on both sides of the House.

As there is no time available for Back-Bench Members to raise such issues, we are reduced to asking a couple of questions. We spend more time in European Standing Committee B cross-examining the Minister and in debate than we do on the Floor of the House. That is stupid.

My couple of questions, then: first——

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, a few months ago, we spent more time discussing the European Community's new regulations on hot water boilers than we have spent discussing this budget?

Dr. Godman: I can confirm exactly that.

May I ask the Financial Secretary whether, if the Renaval programme—to my constituency, an important regional fund—is to end in 1993, the money will run out before the end of 1992?

I see that the European Court of Justice is to receive an increase of 9·8 per cent. in its budget, which I understand will involve the creation of another 19 posts. Is it the Government's view that the court should be able to raise revenue by way of introducing financial penalties against recalcitrant states and other parties who choose to ignore directives? The European Court of Justice is effectively a supreme court in relation to the Scottish and English legal systems and the legal systems of the other nations. I wanted to ask several more questions about that, but I had better allow someone else to speak.

11.51 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): I share the feelings of outrage expressed by Back Benchers on both sides of the House. The European Community budget is of enormous importance to our people and our economy. Year after year, Britain makes massive net contributions to the European Community budget and it appears that it is barely restrained at all. We are told that the European Parliament actually puts pressure on the Community to increase its expenditure. The only restraint seems to be the Council of Ministers and there—as I pointed out in an intervention, with which my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary agreed—the problem is that the majority of the Community countries are net recipients of the expenditure.

Who will control the European Community budget, therefore? The answer is that we in the House must do our very best to do so, and we can do our best only if we have the proper time and the proper documentation. I regard the bundle of documents that we have been given—hastily stapled and put together—as an absolute disgrace. If we are to consider these most important matters, we need to have the issues and the figures set out carefully and professionally, not in this slovenly way.

I realise that the Minister is not personally responsible —[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he is."] Well, ultimately. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is."] On this occasion, I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I do not think that any of us will give him the benefit of the doubt on the next occasion. The arrangements really do need to be improved. The way in which the papers have been put together and the standards of presentation are slovenly and the House must demand an improvement.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr. Maude *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the Financial Secretary.

Notice taken, that Strangers were present.

Whereupon MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143, put the Question,* That Strangers do withdraw.

Question negatived.

11.54 pm

Mr. Maude: I seek to respond briefly to the debate only because I have been asked a great many questions. My opening speech took up some time because a good half of it was my responding to interventions, which I am happy to do because that is one way in which these debates can be useful.

I accept the strictures that have been made about the documentation, although I am grateful for the comments of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about the improved quality of the Government's explanatory memorandum. I undertake to look carefully at the way in which the documentation is presented in future years.

On the points that have been made about the timing of the debate, I personally would be happy to spend many long hours discussing such matters, but they are arranged between the usual channels and no doubt these points will be made to and through the usual channels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) referred to VAT. The VAT contributions are based on a notional harmonised level of VAT and, as I suspected, the proportion does not vary with changes in individual national bases.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury dealt at some length with the issue of RECHAR. There has been a good deal of concern about that matter and we have sought to have it explained. It has now been explained and we thought that it had been understood by the Commission, but it still wilfully and wantonly withholds moneys that are properly due to this country.

My hon. Friend for Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) referred to value for money and asked why we should spend money on the single European market when it will not be achieved for a long time. The single market is, of course, being achieved on a continual basis. Barriers are being removed by regulation and legislation all the time, so

[Mr. Maude]

1992 is not the magic moment when all the barriers will suddenly disappear. It is a process, but a great deal will come into operation at that time.

As far as structural funds are concerned, that is——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7184/91, relating to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1992, 7368/91, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 8442/91, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, the proposals described in the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 20th November 1991, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 7731/91, relating to the Draft Budget for 1992, 9092/91, relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget, the proposals described in the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 18th November 1991, relating to Council consideration of the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications and 8719/91, relating to revision of the Financial Perspective for 1992; and supports the Government's efforts to maintain budget discipline and ensure that the Financial Regulation is applied strictly.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I raise this point of order now rather than during the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it would have taken up some time. We accept your ruling that it was judged by the Chair not to be appropriate to use the power of the Standing Order to extend this debate, but that leaves this question for the House and perhaps for the Select Committee on Procedure: will it be possible to insist on having at least a full day's debate plus an hour and a half for such debates in the future so that various issues can be covered?

One such issue is the procedure of setting the budget itself and the modifications that may or may not be proposed by the European Parliament and the reaction of the Council of Ministers. A second relates to the Court of Auditors, because Parliament should seek to give support to the Court of Auditors. Although this matter can be raised at other times in the parliamentary year, it also relates to the question of resources that are available to the Court of Auditors, which is a separate issue from the consideration of the report of the Court of Auditors.

The third issue that arises relates to trying to ensure that those hon. Members who serve on European Standing Committees A and B and on the Scrutiny Committee, plus other hon. Members who are interested in European issues, can give as much attention to these vast sums of money and to Britian's contribution to the European budget as they do to the design of central heating boilers and other things.

I realise that the Chair may not be able to answer these points immediately, but they should be on the record so that the House can consider them in one way or another.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the House, and certainly the Chair, appreciates the hon. Gentleman's comments, which no doubt have been noticed by the Front-Bench spokesmen and the authorities of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not it worth stating that the Government are in charge of business and that they should have decided—indeed, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) should have encouraged them —to provide a full day for debate instead of having the Leader of the House recommend a four-day week for Members of Parliament?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not entering into a debate, but I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman had been in the Chamber earlier he would have heard the remarks made from the Chair.

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That Sir William Clark, Mr Roger Sims and Sir Charles Morrison be discharged from the Select Committee on Procedure and Mr. James Hill, Mr. Patrick Nicholls and Sir Gerrard Neale be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Chapman on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Royal Naval Workshop, Almondbank

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.58 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The royal naval aircraft workshop at Almondbank in my constituency was established during the dark days of the second world war. The location of such an important aircraft repair workshop was determined by the military strategic need to locate vital establishments away from high-risk areas and by the need to spread the risk further by placing key military establishments in less densely populated areas of the country. The logic for placing high-risk naval and military essential maintenance facilities far from other high-risk naval and military establishments is as relevant today as it was at the time of the German air offensive in the 1940s.

Since 1945, Almondbank has witnessed many changes of military policy. Consequently, when the 400-plus work force were advised by the base commander that a review of the tri-service aircraft repair and maintenence units, which embraces Almondbank, Fleetlands and St. Athan, may result in the closure of Almondbank, the alarm bells began to ring.

I recognise that such concern, although understandable, could be premature, because the logic of retaining a relatively low-cost workshop, as well as a distribution and stores depot at Almondbank, could be reinforced by any review of tri-service facilities. I also recognise that Almondbank's stable and efficient work force could fare well in any review.

Why, then, am I concerned? Because my experience of management surveys—I have been involved in complex and highly technical inquiries into, for example, the takeover of substantial maintenance facilities—has frequently highlighted the vital need to ensure that all the information concerning the different establishments uses the same base line and criteria.

In simple language, the system of measurement at each establishment must be the same base line. The hours worked per direct worker, per year, must be calculated on the same statistics and should clearly show such variables as sickness leave. I seek an assurance from my right hon. Friend the Minister that there is no difference in the base line measurements between the establishments.

I seek an assurance from my right hon. Friend that all the units involved in the review of the tri-service aircraft maintenance facilities have historically used the same base criteria. I will not be surprised if my right hon. Friend cannot give me that assurance, because the services involved are historically unlikely to have done so. Different units in the Navy may not use the same base criteria.

Consequently, I hope that my right hon. Friend will write to me when he has had the opportunity to investigate the facts, especially those relating to historic base and cross-revenue criteria. The work force and I need to be reassured that decisions affecting Almondbank and other units will be based upon verifiable common measurements.

I should also remind my right hon. friend that, within the past two weeks, Almondbank has received an award for the efficient way in which its uses electricity. The Hydro Board efficiency award is much sought after. In addition to that award, Almondbank has a low-cost contract for the supply of the cheapest industrial electricity—electricity generated from hydro power. That is another reason for retaining the workshop at Almondbank.

My right hon. Friend will also be aware of the specialist plating carried out at Almondbank. He will be aware of the huge savings achieved by plating the worn parts of helicopter transmissions. For example, a £300 plating job can be measured against the cost of a new component worth anything up to £18,000. Parts can be plated again and again, thus saving the taxpayer many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

My right hon. Friend will also be aware of the substantial investment that has taken place at Almondbank. Consequently, the costs of moving may never be recovered fully via revenue expenditure elsewhere. I should want to see the evidence supporting real revenue savings were a decision taken to relocate the facilities from Almondbank. Relocation costs must be fully addressed and explained. My right hon. Friend should remember that Almondbank is in a low-cost local authority area and that substantial room still exists at the base for additional expansion, if required.

It would be most odd if the helicopter maintenance and stores unit were relocated in a high-cost area, such as southern England, or in Wales, particularly following recent decisions by the Royal Air Force to locate so many of its assets in Scotland. The Royal Marine and Royal Navy aviation assets are also based in Scotland.

The location of Almondbank in relation to Harrogate, where the main RAF stores facility is located, and to Lossiemouth, Kinloss, Leuchars, Condor and Prestwick makes it possible for the recently computerised stores unit at Almondbank to provide a by-return spares service to all those Scottish bases. Moreover, Almondbank has recently been geared up to handle the Chinook mark 2 and the new Merlin helicopters, which will soon come into service. Those are further good reasons for retaining Almondbank.

In the main, the work force at Almondbank live in the constituencies of Perth and Kinross and Tayside, North, with some people travelling to work from Stirling. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that those three constituencies are the most northern United Kingdom constituencies held by the Conservative party? Almondbank is the largest engineering employer in the Perth and Kinross district council area and the largest employer in my constituency. I draw attention to that because, if the review team's report can produce only marginal savings, the political cost would be too high and the decision to close the base should not be taken.

I make no apology for reminding my right hon. Friend that the military is an essential and important part of the fabric of the Union. That the Scots provide a substantial proportion of armed forces personnel cannot be disputed. With less than 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom's population, Scotland regularly contributes more than 20 per cent. of naval, Army and Air Force personnel. To continue to recruit from Scotland at acceptable levels requires the location of military bases within Scotland. It is also tangible evidence of the Government's commitment to the Union, which the Opposition can never emulate.

Constituents of Tayside, North and their representative in this place have never failed to support the need for military bases in Scotland, which includes the nuclear force on the Clyde. We also support the need for the noisy, fast, low-flying jet aircraft, so we expect a Conservative

[Mr. Bill Walker]

Government to retain the royal naval workshop at Almondbank. Helicopters are the military hardware of today and tomorrow, and a substantial number of helicopters will be based in Scotland and northern England, which makes Almondbank an ideal location.

I suppose that one of the strongest arguments for the continuing existence of the royal naval aircraft workshop and stores is the low staff turnover and the relatively low-cost housing, coupled with the superb health service and education facilities in north Tayside. That makes it easy to recruit and retain staff at Almondbank. In addition, the technical training and the links with Perth college have, down the years, produced the sort of textbook local community involvement that is a credit to the management of the workshops and the staff at the college. Those factors would not be easily replaced were Almondbank to close.

I believe that I have clearly articulated why the base and workshops at Almondbank should be retained, for defence and political reasons. I hope that I have demonstrated that Tayside and Scotland need to retain the skills and the training that the combination of Perth college and Almondbank provides. For all those reasons, the Government would be well advised to retain the happy, efficient royal naval aircraft workshop and stores unit at Almondbank in my constituency.

12.11 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on having secured this Adjournment debate. He, together with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), has taken a close interest in the royal naval aircraft workshop at Almondbank. I am glad to have the opportunity to pay tribute to its work in support of the Royal Navy and the other services, and to explain our thinking about its future.

The workshop is situated on the western outskirts of Perth, on a single site of about 25 acres. Its origins date back to the second world war. The original workshops were created in 1940 to support the royal naval stores depot which moved to Almondbank following bombing raids on the Coventry district that year. By 1946, the depot had expanded to a total of seven sites. From 1946 to 1973, the repair, maintenance, manufacture and storage of all types of naval air stores, for fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, was carried out at Almondbank.

At the beginning of the 1970s, it was decided to rationalise some aircraft support work. The Royal Air Force became responsible for the repair and overhaul of fixed wing aircraft. The Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation—NARO—was established to undertake helicopter repair and overhaul for all three services. That coincided with the closure of the royal naval stores depot at Almondbank. Therefore, in June 1973, the royal naval aircraft workshop was created as part of NARO, with all remaining activities, including administration and stores, being concentrated on the workshop site.

NARO includes the royal naval aircraft yard at Fleetlands in Gosport, near Portsmouth, which is the main helicopter third-line repair facility, dealing with airframes and engines. There is also a small facility at Wroughton, near Swindon. Fixed-wing third-line repair is primarily conducted at RAF St. Athan in south Wales, while electronic component work for both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft is largely centralised at RAF Sealand near Chester.

The main task at Aldmondbank today may be summed up as component repair, accounting for some 85 per cent. of the total work load. My hon. Friend referred to some of the examples of that work currently in progress. Every year, RNAW Almondbank deals with about 15,000 components of 470 different types. As well as repair, the workshop undertakes complete reconditioning of components. In addition to supporting the tri-service helicopter fleet, the establishment continues to use existing facilities to support RAF Buccaneer and Phantom aircraft, but this work will decline as those aircraft are retired from service. The range of items dealt with includes helicopter transmission components, also hydraulic, avionic and general engineering components. A range of modern engineering techniques is used to deal with the varying requirements of the work and different materials.

The workshop is also equipped to salvage parts. The salvage of parts from transmission components is a major activity, offering a cost-effective alternative to buying new parts. RNAW Almondbank acts as the master tool centre for the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation. That requires expert appraisal of drawings to decide whether tools required at NARO establishments would best be manufactured in house, or purchased from industry. The current tooling task at Perth is the manufacture of small quantities of tools for Astazou, Gem and Lycoming T55 aero engines and for Olympus and Tyne marine gas turbines.

There is a wide range of special manufacturing tasks. These include the manufacture and repair of rescue equipment, the manufacture of modification sets, aircraft seats and covers, electrical cable looms, avionic test sets, engine stands and a range of ground support equipment. The repair of Lynx main rotor blades is also undertaken. The establishment is able to manufacture and carry out major repairs on glassfibre reinforced products.

In addition to these repair and manufacturing tasks, the establishment also contains an element of the Royal Naval Stores and Transport Service, RNSTS. This primarily provides stores and logistic support for RNAW, but also carries out transhipment tasks for the naval stores organisation and for the RAF priority freight network.

To carry out this very wide range of tasks, RNAW Almondbank has a work force of some 400, as my hon. Friend said. Twenty-five contractors' staff also work at Almondbank. The superintendent is a Royal Navy commander, responsible to the Director General Aircraft (Navy). He is the only service man at Almondbank, the remainder of the staff being civilian. Some 50 of these are from the RNSTS. Recruitment and, just as important, retention of staff are good. The average length of service is over 11 years, and many employees have over 20 years' service.

The nature of the work is reflected in the high proportion of skilled craftsmen, of which there are some 175. There are also 23 apprentice craftsmen training under a standards-based scheme. Air service training at Scone, RNAY Fleetlands and Perth technical college provide appropriate training modules. This year Almondbank apprentices won a first and a second prize in the MoD's national Tom Nevard competition, an achievement of

which the establishment is justly proud. I reiterate what my hon. Friend said about Almondbank's success in energy conservation which won for it an energy efficiency award from the Hydro Board.

In addition to apprentice training, many personnel, at all levels, devote some of their own time to studying for a range of qualifications to improve their skills and develop their careers. The majority of specialist training is carried out by local colleges, with which the establishment enjoys an excellent relationship.

The skills and versatility of the work force were tested to the full during the Falklands and Gulf conflicts. The ability to produce, at short notice, equipment and manufacture spares not readily available from commercial sources proved of great value. On each occasion, the establishment worked round the clock to meet high priority requirements. Perth may be proud of the establishment's achievements in peace and war.

The Statement on the Defence Estimates, "Britain's Defence for the 90s", set out our strategy for smaller, but flexible and mobile, forces. Helicopters will continue to play an important part in all three services in the next decade and beyond. There is no doubt that there will be a substantial continuing need for the type of work currently undertaken at Almondbank.

However, we must make sure that every aspect of support is carried out as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. Failure to do so would be to the detriment of the front line. It is for that reason that we are currently conducting, under the auspices of the Cabinet Office, an efficiency scrutiny into the arrangements for third-line helicopter repair. The terms of reference are broad. The scrutiny team is required to look at the effectiveness of the current arrangements. It is asked to assess the future capacity required for fixed and rotary wing aircraft repair in the light of planned force levels, and to compare that with the capabilities currently planned.

The team is also asked to consider whether there is a scope for rationalisation of facilities and to consider the possible merits of a single defence support agency, extending work already undertaken on the possibility of transforming NARO into an agency. While the scrutiny team has been asked to consider rationalisation, there is no presumption that this is the likely or preferred outcome.

My hon. Friend has eloquently voiced the concerns felt by many of the Almondbank work force. I assure him and his constituents that Almondbank has not in any way been singled out for potential closure. All the establishments presently, or potentially, concerned with this important work come within the study's remit.

I emphasise to my hon. Friend that the playing field is even. The calculations being made by the efficiency scrutiny team will be based on like information for all the different sites. Whether that means the team's historical information is on an identical basis is another matter, but it will make absolutely certain that any information that it uses directly compares like with like.

The scrutiny team is not due to report until early next year. Its recommendations, whatever they may be, will be carefully considered and, if necessary, further work commissioned. Ministers will consider the extent and timescale of implementation of the report in the light of all the relevant factors. In addition to possible savings from any transfer of work whatever establishments it might involve, we would need to consider the costs involved. We would need to consider, too, the availability of skilled workpeople and the economic impact of any proposal. This point was made by my hon. Friend. Any proposal with a significant impact on civilian staff would be the subject of formal consultation with unions and work force before any decision was taken.

I cannot give my hon. Friend any absolute assurance about the future of the royal naval aircraft workshop Almondbank. It would be wrong to constrain the scrutiny team in such a way. I know that uncertainty is unsettling, and have no wish to prolong it more than necessary. I am well aware of the valuable work carried out at Almondbank, but in the long term, it is in everyone's interest that all defence activities are reviewed from time to time, and that studies are carried through and assessed before any decisions are taken. The present position is that no proposal to close Almondbank has been put forward, let alone decided. No decision will be taken until the spring. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to make this clear.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 November 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

London Underground (Safety Measures) Act 1991

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Monday 2 December at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Corporation Tax

2. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of corporation tax for small companies; and what it was 12 years ago.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): The small companies rate of corporation tax is 25 per cent. compared with 42 per cent. at the time of the 1979 general election.

Mr. Gill: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the Government's significant progress in reducing corporate tax rates. However, will he assure the House that the importance of retained profits is truly understood by his Department, especially in relation to unquoted companies where the profits ploughed back by those companies are often the only source of capital? If that seedcorn is confiscated, it inevitably drives companies into the hands of their bankers, which gives rise to many of the problems that small businesses are currently experiencing.

Mr. Maude: I take my hon. Friend's question as an expression of support for our policy of increasing the amount of profit that is left with companies for them to retain or distribute as they think proper. That is the best way of providing a good environment in which businesses can flourish. That is the judgment not just of the Government, but of those hard-hearted characters who decide where mobile investment projecs should go in the EC. The majority of Japanese mobile investment projects and many of the American projects are coming to Britain in preference to anywhere else because Britain has the best environment in which to do business.

Mr. Battle: Is not the uniform business rate imposed by the Government hammering small businesses which cannot pay it? Is not that an extra tax that the Government have imposed on business?

Mr. Maude: Britain is full of small business people who are breathing a sigh of relief that their business rate is limited to an increase in the retail prices index rather than the 60 or 70 per cent. annual increases that some irresponsible Labour-controlled councils were imposing and which had the sole effect of driving businesses out of many of our major inner-city centres.

Mr. Hill: My hon. Friend will realise that his statement on corporation tax for small companies needs slight adjustment and I am sure that he is considering a major adjustment on capital gains, which I understand is one of the taxes where the cost of collection exceeds the revenue. Will he consider those matters before the next budget?

Mr. Maude: I treat my hon. Friend's question as an early Budget representation, which I have noted and will consider carefully.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

3. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has had any further discussions concerning the closure of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; and if he will make a statement.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): Both I and my officials have had a number of such discussions with a variety of people. On 6 November I saw a delegation of small business men who had been customers of BCCI, and yesterday I saw representatives of the BCCI depositors protection association.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the proposals put forward by the provisional liquidator and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi as a first step towards a settlement of the problem? Will he confirm that the Government support a further adjournment of the liquidation period on Monday to allow the negotiations to be completed? Does he agree that the liquidators and other representatives should study every proposal and option in order to secure the best possible deal for depositors, creditors and former members of staff?

Mr. Maples: Obviously, the Government share the hon. Gentleman's pleasure at the fact that the liquidator may well be working out an arrangement with the main shareholders that would mean BCCI's creditors possibly getting a considerably greater return on what they are owed than was previously thought possible. Those negotiations are a matter for the liquidator and shareholders, and the question of what the court should do is a matter for the court and the parties before it, not the Government.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Minister agree that we are long past the stage of apportioning blame? People may have been misled, but they may not have been. Should not we now bend our efforts to supporting the proposal that the Minister mentioned and to finding some way of compensating those who have lost dearly?

Mr. Maples: The first line of compensation is the deposit protection scheme, which needs a liquidation order

to come into effect. Whether or not that will happen on 2 December remains to be seen. The Government will welcome any arrangement that the liquidator and the principal shareholders can make that would result in BCCI's depositors getting a considerably greater return on their investment than was previously thought possible.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Minister share the view of Sir Leon Brittan and the European Commission that there should be a Europeanwide deposit protection scheme—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Such is the hostility of Conservative Members to Europe that it is quite mind-boggling. Does the Minister also share Sir Leon's view that such a scheme should include non-sterling deposits? In the aftermath of the Bingham inquiry, will he ensure that there is a full review of the second banking directive?

Mr. Maples: Clearly, the Government will take appropriate action on any recommendations that result from the Bingham inquiry. Early drafts of a possible EC directive on a Europeanwide deposit protection scheme are being discussed. We think that the basis should be home country protection and that one should not be liable to pay deposits in other people's currencies.

Inflation

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of retail price inflation in the United Kingdom; and what is the average within the European Community.

13. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest annual rate of inflation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): Headline retail prices index inflation in the United Kingdom was 3·7 per cent. in the year to October—the lowest for three and a half years. The latest available average for the European Community is 4·6 per cent. in the year to September.

Mr. Greenway: Are not those figures very encouraging? Does not the fact that our inflation rate is lower than the European Community average offer a real opportunity to British industry to improve its competitiveness? Does my right hon. Friend by any chance recollect the average inflation rate under the last Labour Government? What does he think about that?

Mr. Lamont: Just by chance, I do remember it. The average inflation rate under the last Labour Government was no less than the astonishing figure of 15½ per cent. What is so interesting is that despite that disastrous performance, Labour's policies have hardly altered—and they would have the same effect again.

Sir Michael Neubert: While the reduction in price rises is very welcome—taking us back to where we were three and a half years ago—does my right hon. Friend recognise the irony that, as a result, current interest rates—the price of money—are, in real terms, at an all-time high? Can he defy what may appear to be a paradox by both easing the burden of excessive interest rates and pressing on relentlessly until inflation is completely eradicated from the economy?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend asks me to do several things that might not be so easy to do at once. Our first priority must be to maintain the pound's position within the exchange rate mechanism. That is our policy for interest rates. At the same time, we have been able to achieve a dramatic reduction in inflation—which, because it is better than the European Community average, means that there are better prospects for exporting firms and for the jobs in them. There is no way that we can sustain high employment unless we are competitive in inflation levels.

Dr. Bray: Is the Chancellor worried that we are not sustaining high employment? Is he worried that it has taken such a deep and prolonged recession to reduce inflation to its current level? Does he think that he is doing a good job in alerting the country to the rapid rate of convergence at which he is aiming in the exchange rate mechanism and the possible move towards European monetary union?

Mr. Lamont: I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman's last point. If I understood him correctly, he seemed to be saying that our inflation rate was converging too quickly, and that that was imposing costs on the economy. That is an extraordinary contrast with the uncritical support for monetary union expressed by his right hon. and hon. Friends, who want to leap in with no conditions and to throw away the conditions that we have negotiated—*[Laughter.]* Labour Members scoff, but that is precisely what the Leader of the Opposition said in the debate the other day.

Mr. Higgins: My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the dramatic reduction in the inflation rate. Is he aware that in setting standard spending assessments for prudent local authorities, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment expects them to achieve an even greater reduction in costs and prices? In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor consider consulting the Secretary of State to establish whether the SSAs for prudent authorities, which demand such remarkable reductions in costs and prices, are really justified?

Mr. Lamont: That is an extremely ingenious question. I know that my right hon. Friend has already made those points to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. We believe, however, that the settlement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced to the House the other day is realistic and generous and that all responsible local authorities should be able to cope with it.

Mr. James Lamond: The reduction in inflation is to be welcomed; it will greatly assist in increasing the number of job opportunities. However, does not every reduction in the inflation rate leave the real interest rate a little higher? Surely the Chancellor now has the opportunity to announce a further cut in interest rates. That would help every company in the country, including the small companies that were the subject of an earlier question.

Mr. Lamont: As I have already said, our first priority will be to maintain the external value of the currency—that is, to maintain its position in the exchange rate mechanism. I dread to think where the pound would have been in the past few days if I had followed the advice of Opposition Members.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Chancellor will probably recall that his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor, told the House on 15 February 1990 that the retail prices index was an inaccurate measure of the real rate of inflation. He reiterated that point in June and again in July.

Is not it the case that the present underlying rate of inflation in the United Kingdom is 5·5 per cent. if mortgage interest rates are excluded, and 7·3 per cent. if both mortgage interest rates and poll tax are excluded? Is it not also the case that the underlying rate was 5·9 per cent. when the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Chancellor, and that it is now 7·3 per cent? A little more humility would not go amiss.

Mr. Lamont: I touched on those points yesterday when I appeared before the Treasury Select Committee. Whether we take the retail prices index minus mortgage interest payments or producer prices, the rate of inflation has declined sharply in the past year and I suspect that the underlying measures of inflation will continue to decline in the next year—*[Interruption.]* I can tell the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who is interrupting from a sedentary position, that the underlying rate of inflation compares extremely well with the position under the Labour Government of which he was a member.

Manufacturing Industry

5. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual rate of investment in manufacturing industry *(a)* from 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* since 1979.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): Manufacturing investment, narrowly defined, averaged £9·8 billion a year between 1974 and 1979 and £9·8 billion a year between 1979 and 1990 at constant 1985 prices. Total capital investment in plant and machinery averaged £17·7 billion between 1974 and 1979 and £24·3 billion a year between 1979 and 1990, also at constant 1985 prices.

Mr. McKay: The Minister has chosen his statistics carefully. Has not he forgotten to mention that between 1979 and 1981 investment fell sharply and that it was lower in the third quarter of 1991 than in any other quarter—12 per cent. of the 1979 level? With all the income from oil and from selling off the family silver, is not it a disgrace that manufacturing investment is now lower than in 1979? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes in that vital sector of our economy, why does not he take measures to increase investment?

Mr. Mellor: If one takes the narrow definition of manufacturing investment, which excludes a range of investment that is made by manufacturing companies in services that no longer count as manufacturing investment but which they used to do in-house, the average for the past six years was £10·9 billion—much higher than under the previous Labour Government. I do not know what the Labour party is so proud of, because under the previous Labour Government manufacturing output fell by 2½ per cent. whereas between 1981 and 1991 it increased by 25 per cent.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that in the 1980s manufacturing output rose by 31 per cent? Irrespective of what the Labour party says about what happened before 1979, if he visited various parts of Yorkshire he would see massive investment in manufacturing, including £1 million in wool textiles.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but the international comparisons are even more telling. In the 1970s—for much of which there was a Labour Government—the United Kingdom was the only Group of Seven country where average year-on-year manufacturing output fell. In the 1980s, we ran joint third among the Group of Seven, which was a considerable improvement.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the Chief Secretary aware that today 900 of our fellow citizens in Derby, Crewe and York will lose their jobs in the manufacturing sector? Is he further aware that since 1979, 2 million of our fellow citizens have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector? Is it the Government's policy to arrest the accelerating decline in manufacturing—both in investment and employment—and, if so, when they will do it and how?

Mr. Mellor: There is evidence that the decline in manufacturing has been arrested, and I shall give the hon. Gentleman that evidence. It seems clear that in 1991, as in 1990 and 1989 and after decades of decline, Britain's portion of world trade in manufacturing exports will increase. That is a significant achievement, of which the hon. Gentleman should be aware. Despite the Labour party's smears about what has been happening recently, manufacturing exports are up this year, notwithstanding the recession.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The latest Confederation of British Industry economic forecast shows a decline in manufacturing investment in 1991 of almost 20 per cent. and a further decline of 4·4 per cent. in 1992. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman satisfied with that performance?

Mr. Mellor: What is absolutely clear is that——

Mr. John Smith: Answer the question.

Mr. Mellor: I am about to do so. It is not an answer that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will like.

The only basis on which criticism can be made of the inevitable decline in investment during the recession is if high praise is lavished on the Government for the three years in the last 1980s when investment touched peaks. Even with the decline in business investment in this recession, it is about 40 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979. That is the proof of our achievement in the 1980s, to which we can return.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Does not business investment, of which manufacturing investment is a part, remain extremely high? Is not it higher today than throughout the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am only too happy to discuss manufacturing, as it is an important sector of the economy. However, it is 20 per cent. of the economy and I never understand why the Labour party is not interested in the other 80 per cent. It appears that unless people go to work in some landscape recognisable to L. S. Lowry, their jobs, conditions and efforts are not worth talking about.

Consumer Debt

6. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of consumer debt in Britain; and what was the comparable figure in 1981.

Mr. Maples: The level of outstanding consumer debt at 30 September this year was £52·6 billion. Because of changes in coverage, comparable figures are not available for 1981.

Mr. Alton: Those figures, which show £52 billion of personal debt excluding mortgages, surely represent personal misery and are a major cause of family and social breakdown. Does the Minister think that it is now time to implement the proposals in the report "Escaping the Debt Trap" to introduce social loans, to take more stringent action against loan sharks who exploit poor people by their extortionate interest rates and to encourage a more responsible lending policy by banks?

Mr. Maples: On the question of extortion and credit, the Director General of Fair Trading published a report in September which the Department of Trade and Industry is considering. As for the proposals contained in "Escaping the Debt Trap"—the hon. Gentleman kindly sent me a copy—it will not surprise him if I do not agree with all of them. It is not the Government's business to start telling banks and consumers what arrangements they should make between themselves although, clearly, some people are in difficulties with consumer credit. I do not think that the fact that consumer credit is at a high level is evidence that people are miserable—they have done things with the money that they have. Most have either made sensible investments or have bought what they wanted and could afford.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister recognise that the question of loan sharks has been on the agenda for the past 12 years, but that nothing positive has occurred other than the report to which he referred? Is not it time that the Government took on board that question and began to tackle the problem of loan sharks positively? Such action is certainly lacking at the moment.

Mr. Maples: As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), the Government have obtained a report from the Director General of Fair Trading, which was only published on 24 September. It is reasonable to give the appropriate Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry a little more time to respond to it.

Public Spending

7. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about public spending levels.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's plans for public spending were announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement on 6 November. Further details were set out in the written statement published on 13 November.

Mr. Cohen: Most people who see the run-down state of schools and public transport do not think that the picture of public spending is as rosy as that set out by the Chancellor. Does the Minister remember that before the last general election the Government promised an increase in public spending of £11·2 billion in the following three years? In fact, it turned out to be a cut of £12·7 billion. In those circumstances, is not the Chancellor's promise of an extra £10 billion a similar Tory election hoax? Far from protecting public services, is not the Conservative party the party of public squalor?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman would do me a great favour if he could kindly confirm that his party, if in power, would spend an extra £13 billion above what we are spending. We have been trying to extract the figures from the Opposition. If the hon. Gentleman has agreed with members of his Front Bench that that is the line to take, I should be glad of confirmation.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that spending an extra £35 billion could be financed only by massive increases in taxation and higher interest rates, which would lead to a massive increase in the level of unemployment?

Mr. Mellor: This is a point to which we return time and again. No Opposition have ever mutilated more forests in the interests of producing an endless stream of written policy documents containing come-ons and pledges of all sorts to every sectional interest, but when we add up those pledges and cost them, the Labour party becomes very coy. We want to know—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) can leap up and tell me—the House would be delighted to hear from him—how he will cover the difference between the £10 billion of extra taxation to which his party has already committed itself and the £35 billion of extra spending to which it has also committed itself?

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Hon. Members: Answer!

Mrs. Beckett: When I am on the Government side of the House it will be my turn to answer questions. Now it is my turn to ask them.

Speaking of how to meet levels of public spending, does the Chief Secretary recall the sharp increase in borrowing forecast in his public spending programmes? Will he confirm that it would be grossly irresponsible for any Government to cut the standard rate of income tax when public borrowing is about to shoot up in that way and that consequently, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes such a cut in his next Budget, he will have to make it up by increasing other taxes—perhaps VAT?

Mr. Mellor: The record shows that during the 1980s we were able both to increase public expenditure in real terms by about 20 per cent. and to cut tax rates—[HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] Oh yes—and for the decade following 1981-82, we reduced the tax burden.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is wrong.

Mr. Mellor: It is not wrong and I understand that next week we shall have the opportunity to debate the correctness of what I have said.

Mr. Nicholls: Given the new-found concern of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about public borrowing, will my right hon. and learned Friend remind her that the previous Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer managed to borrow not only more money than any

previous Chancellor, but more money than all previous Chancellors added together? What would that do for the living conditions of the poor?

Mr. Mellor: It is an interesting fact that the fastest-growing public expenditure programme under the Labour Government was not the health service, education or social services, but debt interest.

Fixed Investment

8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest International Monetary Fund forecast for growth in United Kingdom business fixed investment in 1991.

Mr. Mellor: A fall of 12 per cent. from the historically high levels reached in 1989 and 1990 is forecast. In 1991 business investment will still be 37 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979.

Mr. Michie: Is the Chief Secretary aware of the IMF prediction of a further 2 per cent. cut in investment next year? Is he unaware of the ever-deepening industrial crisis if such cuts were to take place next year? Is not it time that he built the economy in a constructive way rather than just waffling about it?

Mr. Mellor: As Gavyn Davies, who may be better known to some Opposition Members than he is to us, has said, the interesting thing is at how high a proportion of GDP investment has settled, notwithstanding the recession. It is 14·1 per cent. of GDP for the second half of 1991—that is a high level. If Labour Members wish regularly to employ international statistics on investment, they should bear in mind the fact that during the 1970s the average annual growth rate in business investment in the United Kingdom was 2·3 per cent., against an average of 3·1 per cent. for the Group of Seven. In the 1980s the average annual growth rate in business investment was 6·7 per cent. as against a Group of Seven average of 4·6 per cent. That is quite a transformation.

Mr. Batiste: Is not it clear that the excellent record of business investment in the United Kingdom reflects the fact that business men recognise the Government's commitment to containing inflation in the long term? After all, it is the cost of capital which determines business investment. Would not that be threatened only by the advent of a Labour Government, with their profligate spending plans?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. It also reflects the bold decision taken by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) to cut corporation tax and liberate a range of resources for investments which companies would choose for themselves rather than being pointed in a certain direction by the distorting effect of allowances. In the middle to late 1980s that led not only to an unprecedented increase in investment in terms of value, but to a sharp increase in the quality of that investment. That is evidenced by the unprecedented increase in the productivity of all manner of industries that has taken place since.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman have a serious look at capital allowances, especially for plant and machinery, which should not have only a 25 per cent. capital allowance? That is not an incentive; it is a penal rate. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consult the Confederation of British Industry, which is coming round to the view that a 40 per cent. rate —which is not enough—would be appropriate?

Mr. Mellor: The real point that one needs to note is the increase in capital investment in plant and machinery under this Government—*[Interruption.]* It is no good hon. Members shaking their heads. Since I gave the figures to the House last time, they have not been contradicted. I will give them again and, if I am wrong, I shall have to be put right next week. Gross investment in plant and machinery in the last year in which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) had stewardship of these matters, at constant 1985 prices, was just over £17 billion. In 1990, it was over £32 billion. That is comparing like with like and is a sign of the real difference in investment under this Government.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend remember that under the previous Labour Government, the International Monetary Fund came to the rescue? Is not a warning signal needed for Labour Front-Bench Members over the current draft proposal on economic and monetary union, because it contains a no bail-out clause? This country had better not be under a Labour Government.

Mr. Mellor: That is one of the subtleties of the European negotiations that should impinge on the consciousness of Opposition Members.

Mr. John Smith: As the Chief Secretary takes refuge in international comparisons, especially with the other countries of the Group of Seven, will he explain why the United Kingdom is not only at the bottom of the investment league of the G7, but at the bottom of the investment league of leading European nations?

Mr. Mellor: That is a very short-term statistic. It is clear that over the 1980s, our investment record has run well ahead of that of the rest of the Group of Seven. We shall return to that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and I can swap statistics quite soon and I look forward to it.

Interest Rates

9. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Maples: Base rates are 10½ per cent.

Sir John Farr: Does my hon. Friend believe that interest rates should be reduced by 0·5 per cent. now and that immediate action would save thousands of jobs? Do the Government have the ability to make that adjustment, or are they tied hand and foot by the exchange rate mechanism? If so, will my hon. Friend say so?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend knows that our policy on interest rates is to set them in a way that is compatible with our commitment to the pound's band within the exchange rate mechanism and to bear down on inflation. That policy has been manifestly successful over the past 12 months in reducing the rate of inflation to 3·7 per cent.

Sir Patrick Duffy: Is the Minister aware that a respectable reason for high interest rates is the control of inflation? However, given the claim of the Chancellor of

the Exchequer, in response to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), about lower inflation, should not the Chancellor have a little more regard for board rooms where, in the balance between optimism and pessimism, the state of opinion remains distinctly negative, than for the exigencies of the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Maples: The mood in board rooms as disclosed by the CBI business confidence survey shows something rather different—a substantial and continuing increase in business confidence. Business men who are borrowers naturally want lower interest rates, but I am afraid that the Government have to take a rather broader view of what is in the interests of the economy. They cannot simply allow one sectional interest in the community to override others.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that high interest rates are a disincentive to investment? Instead of indulging in sterile exchanges of statistics across the Chamber, should not the House decide whether the level of investment in this country is adequate to ensure that our manufacturing base can compete against other countries? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] How does the level of investment in this country compare with that of our major competitors?

Mr. Maples: I am surprised that Opposition Members cheered that question. They obviously have short memories. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary has given them the figures on investment in this country and they are rather good. Interest rates are set, as I said, in a way that is compatible with our commitment to the exchange rate mechanism and to bear down on inflation. That policy has been successful. There is nothing in the long run that is more damaging to investment than inflation.

VAT

10. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the changes in the rates of value added tax since the beginning of 1979.

Mr. Maples: From 18 June 1979, the higher rate of VAT was abolished and the standard rate of VAT became 15 per cent. On 1 April this year that rate was increased to 17½ per cent.

Mr. Turner: I thank the Minister for his answer. It demonstrates clearly the enormous burden of indirect taxation that has been placed on the shoulders of millions of families since the Government came to power. Will the Minister give the House a categorical assurance that VAT on road and rail transport will not be increased?

Mr. Maples: What short memories we have. The hon. Gentleman does not remember that, under the previous Labour Government, the rate of VAT on things that they described as luxuries, such as petrol and caravans, was 25 per cent. I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that we will not go back to that.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend concede that the cause of the recession is not the high level of value added tax, but our membership of the exchange rate mechanism? Does he concede also that the question is not whether the war can be won, but whether it can be won with fewer casualties? Is not there a risk that, in future, the present Chancellor will be known in the economy as soldiers remember Field Marshal Lord Haig?

Mr. Maples: No.

PSBR

11. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates the public sector borrowing requirement will be for 1992-93.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The actual PSBR for 1992-93 will be set in the Budget. A working assumption of a PSBR of 3 per cent. of GDP was used to construct the autumn statement forecast.

Mr. Evans: Will the Chancellor confirm that the large increase in the public sector borrowing requirement planned for next year will be to pay for the massive increase in unemployment which has been brought about by his own economic incompetence?

Mr. Lamont: Of the £6 billion increase in the planning total, it is true that £4 billion is for social security, but not all that—indeed, I think that only about £2 billion—is the increase in unemployment benefit. There is another £2 billion for other benefits. There is also a large increase in the financing programmes of nationalised industries. I thought that Opposition Members wanted more investment in infrastructure. That is what they are always telling us and that is what they have got.

Mr. Tim Smith: What would the public sector borrowing requirement be today if it was running at the same proportion of GDP as in 1975-76?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend, remarkably, has those figures at his fingertips. He knows that it was 9½ per cent. of GDP. That would be in excess of £50 billion today. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary pointed out, when the Labour party was in power the fastest-growing item of Government expenditure was debt interest. They would certainly have had no chance of financing their programme without large increases both in taxation and in the borrowing requirement.

Dr. Marek: Will the Chancellor have a word with his Chief Secretary and tell him the facts of life, which are that the burden of taxation is much higher than it was in 1970 when the Labour party was in office? As the Chancellor has decimated British industry, how will he pay for all the public borrowing? Has he a secret agenda to put VAT, for example, on items which bear no VAT at present, such as railway fares, books and periodicals? Has he a secret agenda to increase VAT to 22 per cent? Has he a secret agenda to do both?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman's question makes no sense. He asked how we are going to pay for the borrowing. We shall pay for the borrowing by borrowing —that is the normal way in which one pays for it.

Sir Ian Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Labour party implemented even a fraction of the spending priorities that it has been spreading around over the past year or two, to the tune of £30 billion or £40 billion extra expenditure, it would not only have to

face the problem of raising taxation, but would have to resort to massive borrowing, which would increase interest rates and greatly damage the economy?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party seems to have a new-found concern about the level of borrowing, but I must advise the Opposition that if they are serious about that, they could pay for their programme only by increases in taxation. There is no other way.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Field: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the anniversary of his Prime Ministership. May I remind him that inflation has come down from 10·9 to 3·7 per cent., that interest rates have been cut by 4·5 percentage points and that we have the lowest level of inflation for 25 years—below that of west Germany. Is not that in marked contrast to the events of 25 years ago this very day, as reported by *The Times*, when the then Economic Affairs Minister warned the Confederation of British Industry that if it breached the inflation-wage restraint, there would be a prices and incomes policy? It brought the worst economic turmoil that this country had seen since the industrial revolution. Will my right hon. Friend set out his policy for 1992—*[Interruption.]*—so that I can congratulate him on his anniversary again next year, when he will still be Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right about the success of the anti-inflationary policy. It is absolutely imperative that we get inflation down to the lowest level and keep it there, for most of our future prospects depend on that being the case. Happily, we are making excellent progress on inflation. It has come down and we shall ensure that it stays down.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that in the past 12 months, because of his policies, 768,000 people have lost their jobs, 100,000 people have lost their homes and 45,000 companies have gone bankrupt? How does he square that record with his promise a year ago today to build a country at ease with itself?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman examines completely what has happened during the past year with that objective in mind, he will find that not only have we cut inflation, as I have just said, but we have cut interest rates. We have given Britain the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe. We have successfully come through a war. We have successfully produced a new initiative for the Kurds which has saved hundreds of thousands of lives. We have introduced the largest debt relief package anywhere at any stage and we have made changes in both domestic and overseas policies which command the wide respect of people throughout the country.

Mr. Kinnock: Is not it clear that everyone knows that the Prime Minister has reduced inflation only by creating a deep and lasting recession? The right hon. Gentleman has lost more jobs, more businesses and more homes than any Prime Minister in modern history. He truly will be known as the Prime Minister of evictions, unemployment and bankruptcies and that is why, as soon as the people get the chance at the next general election, they will stop him.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cannot seriously expect that the people of this country will buy the pig-in-a-poke policies that he produces. Now that inflation and interest rates are coming down, the economy is moving into an upturn and prospects are getting better, as even the Labour party's former adviser has agreed and written repeatedly in the newspapers.

Mr. Kinnock: If there are any pig-in-a-poke policies, the recession policies of the Government are the pig and 768,000 people have got the poke.

The Prime Minister: I can only assume that the right hon. Gentleman's last question was a knee-jerk reaction.

Derbyshire

Q2. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to visit Derbyshire.

The Prime Minister: I am making a series of visits to all parts of the country and very much hope to include Derbyshire.

Mrs. Currie: Is the Prime Minister aware that in south Derbyshire, having seen off Arthur Scargill, we have a vigorous, successful engineering industry, a high level of exports and a young and growing work force with a low level of unemployment? We know that we are far better off in Europe—indeed, we are well off in Europe—and far better off in Europe than out. May I therefore pass on to the Prime Minister the good wishes of all my constituents for his efforts at Maastricht and hope that when he has finished there he will come up to Derbyshire and tell us all about it?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I share her view that industry, commerce and individuals in this country are better off in the European Community than outside it. Many companies are increasing their sales and increasing their relationship with Europe week after week. One of our objectives at Maastricht will be to achieve stricter implementation of Community measures to ensure that there is genuinely a level playing field for British industry and commerce in Europe.

Mr. Skinner: If the Prime Minister comes to Derbyshire, whatever else he does, he wants to avoid canvassing with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). When she went to Bolsover a few years ago at the time of the salmonella in eggs crisis, she went into South Normanton marketplace and met a woman there who said, "Hey you, are you Currie, the one about the salmonella?" The hon. Lady said, "Oh, yes. Are you going to vote Tory?" The woman said, "Look, I've got six of

these eggs in my basket and if you don't sling your hook back to south Derbyshire, you'll have these on top of your head."

Mr. Speaker: I did not detect a question in all that, but carry on.

The Prime Minister: I suspect that many people in Bolsover will carry eggs in their basket in the hope of meeting the hon. Gentleman.

Engagements

Q3. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir David Steel: Does the Prime Minister accept that any reform of the government of Scotland implies some useful reform of the procedures of this place? As it is now three weeks since the Kincardine and Deeside by-election, when will he respond to our invitation to meet him to discuss these serious matters?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear to the right hon. Gentleman and to the House that we believe that the Union between the United Kingdom and Scotland is important. We have no plans to change it.

Q4. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. Friend recall the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on Tuesday about monetary union? He said that he was surprised at the contradictory answers which the House had received from the shadow Chancellor and the Leader of the Opposition on this complex issue. Why was my right hon. Friend surprised?

The Prime Minister: I am always hoping for something better from the right hon. Gentlemens although, alas, I rarely get it. The Leader of the Opposition claims that he has been a consistent supporter of the Common Market for years, but everyone knows that he was a consistent and bitter opponent of it for many years. Many of us doubt that he has really changed his mind.

Liverpool

Q5. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to make his first visit to Liverpool.

The Prime Minister: I am making a series of visits to all parts of the country and hope to include Liverpool in them.

Mr. Parry: When the Prime Minister visits Liverpool will he meet some of the local trade union leaders and some of the long-term unemployed, especially the construction workers who lobbied Parliament last week? Unemployment is very high in Liverpool. My constituency has the highest level in England, Scotland and Wales with an average of 30 per cent. When the Prime Minister arrives, will he let people know that he is coming? His predecessor, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), crept into Liverpool and crept out again without letting people know that she was coming. That was an insult to the people of Liverpool and I hope that it will never be repeated.

The Prime Minister: I will certainly bear that in mind. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about unemployment in Liverpool and elsewhere. I know that he will join me in welcoming the announcement yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury at the start of the project to construct a new building for Customs and Excise at Queen's dock. When completed, it will provide more than 800 new jobs locally.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend give his assurance that, neither explicitly nor implicitly will any deal be done at Maastricht?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It will have to be done in Liverpool, I am afraid.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Portsmouth, which is connected to the continent by the finest ferry services in the country, there is a growing realisation that success at Maastricht is crucial to trade and investment, on which jobs depend, and that the main prize to be achieved is an agreement which recognises the importance of closer co-operation between European nations rather than moves towards inevitable integration?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is crucial to our trade and investment that we continue to play a leading role in the Community. All the Governments of the Community, without exception, are working for an agreement at Maastricht, but there are important national interests at stake. I am negotiating for an agreement that reflects our national interests and is also in the interests of a wider Europe.

Mrs. Wise: Does the Prime Minister understand that his description of the Sunday trading laws as "bizarre" has encouraged law breaking? Will he withdraw that word and condemn the retail giant law breakers?

The Prime Minister: I should have thought that the hon. Lady would now recognise that the description that I gave was entirely apposite. The present situation is unsatisfactory. There are acute difficulties in changing that in the short term. The House of Lords has concluded that our Sunday trading laws are unclear and has therefore referred them to the European Court of Justice to clarify whether they are compatible with European law. We hope that the European Court will make its ruling at the earliest possible moment so that the House of Lords can give a judgment. In the light of that, the next step will be for the Government to identify proposals that will command the support of the House.

Q7. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that on 15 May 1983 he said:

"We want out of the Common Market?"

Could he also tell me whether he said on 16 December 1983:

"We are committed to a non-nuclear defence policy?"

Also will he confirm that in August 1991 he said:

"I think the people trust me. They trust me for my word and my attitude."

Would he also tell me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that is enough.

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that, of course, I made none of those statements, but I believe that each of them can be attributed to the Leader of the Opposition. It was also the Leader of the Opposition who said that if he were to abandon socialism he would not be worth voting for.

Q8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michie: Will the Prime Minister tell the House where my constituent Joanne, who is on a vocational course, receives £35 a week, lives on her own through no choice of her own, occasionally goes without food and sits in the dark because she has no coins for the meter, fits into his citizens charter and the classless society?

The Prime Minister: I cannot comment on individual cases without all the information available in front of me. If the hon. Gentleman will provide me with all the information, I shall examine the case.

Q9. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Twinn: I thank my right hon. Friend for his clear and positive support for finding a solution in Cyprus. Will he now seek the urgent help of the President of the United States in making it clear to the new Government in Turkey that the west expects a positive and constructive contribution to the United Nations peace process from now on?

The Prime Minister: I have discussed Cyprus with President Bush on more than one occasion and we both actively supported the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General. A settlement will require good will on both sides and I hope that the new Turkish Government will play a full, constructive and early part in the Secretary-General's renewed efforts to find a settlement. A settlement in Cyprus is long overdue.

Q10. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: Have the Government finally abandoned the erstwhile Tory doctrine that the rule of law must be upheld in all circumstances, now that the Attorney-General is turning a blind eye to big supermarkets breaking the Sunday trading law and as the poll tax non-payment campaign has apparently recruited the architect's daughter?

The Prime Minister: The law must be obeyed. In the case of Sunday trading, it is not at the moment clear, because of the House of Lords' ruling, what the law may be. In the case of the community charge, the law is clear. People should pay their community charge. It might have helped if the hon. Gentleman had given people a better example in that respect.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week, please?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Transport and Works Bill.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Prison Security Bill.

WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER—Motion to take note of EC documents relating to the reform of the common agricultural policy. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER—Opposition day (2nd allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion described as "The Economy and the Continuing Recession".

FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER—Private Members' Motions

MONDAY 9 DECEMBER—Proceedings on the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Bill.

As I announced last Thursday, I can now confirm that European Standing Committee B will meet at 4 pm on Monday 2 December to consider European Community documents relating to indirect taxation. Details have already been given in the *Official Report*.

[Wednesday 4 December

Floor of the House

European Community Documents

a)	*8356/90*	*Agricultural Production Methods*
b)	*7570/91*	*Development and Future of Common Agricultural Policy*
c)	*8886/91*	*CAP Reform: Legal Texts*
d)	*8950/91*	*CAP Reform: Legal Texts (Milk Sector)*
e)	*9136/91*	*CAP Reform: Legal Texts (Accompanying Measures)*
f)	*8766/91*	*Raw Tobacco*

Reports of European Legislation Committee

a) HC 29-ii (1990-91)
b) HC 29-xxix (1990-91), and HC 29-xxx (1990-91) and HC 24-iii (1991-92)
c) HC 24-ii (1991-92)
d) HC 24-iii (1991-92)
e) HC 24-iii (1991-92)
f) HC 24-ii (1991-92).]

Dr. Cunningham: I welcome the debate on agriculture and the reform of the common agricultural policy. I thank the Leader of the House for arranging the debate which, I am sure, will be generally welcome throughout the House. May I press him to give consideration now to a debate on the fishing industry at an early date? There is widespread concern in the country—particularly in fishing port constituencies and not least in my constituency of Copeland—about the problems facing the British fishing industry. I am sure that a debate on fishing would also be generally welcomed by hon. Members.

As today we have heard more than 900 redundancies announced by British Rail Engineering Limited and more than 400 further redundancies regrettably announced by Rolls-Royce, as well as reports of increasing difficulty, even among graduates, in finding employment and career opportunities, is it not wholly appropriate that next week we are to have a debate in Opposition time on the economy and the continuing deep and damaging recession? As that debate is to be held on Thursday, in part at least to accommodate the timetable of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when business questions will inevitably eat into Opposition Supply time, may we have a guarantee that the Government will not make any additional statements that day?

I remind the right hon. Gentleman of my request last Thursday for a debate on the economy of London. Has he seen the reports today of the imminent report by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte on the way in which our capital city is losing its world status due to the problems of decline, congestion and poor transport? Is he aware that such a loss damages not only London but the nation as a whole? I urge him to reconsider his decision of last week and to find Government time for a debate on the future of London and its economy.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments about the debate on the common agricultural policy. It is a timely debate. We have reached the point in negotiations on reform when it would be useful to have a debate in the House. I appreciate the difficulties that have arisen in arranging the debate next week at a time convenient for everyone. I have endeavoured to do my best and I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about that.

I recognise the importance of fishing and we are coming to an important point in the European Community's year on fishing. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am endeavouring to arrange an early debate, and in good time, on that point.

Regarding the hon. Gentleman's comments about next Thursday's debate, he knows that it is not possible to give a guarantee because absolutely urgent matters, about which the House may want a statement, may arise on the day. Of course, I cannot predict whether that will be the case. I shall use my best endeavours to ensure that we do not have a statement on that day, thus allowing as much time as possible after the business statement for the debate.

The debate next week will be about the economy in general, and I am sure that it will be possible then to refer to economic matters affecting London. As is clear from the business of the House just now, in the run-up to the Christmas recess there is a great deal of legislative business to be undertaken, so I cannot promise a separate debate on London's economy in Government time. Hon. Members wishing to speak on the subject will have to endeavour to use the opportunities next week.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend explain why, when between five and six days were given to the discussion of the Queen's Speech, only two days were given for discussion of Maastricht, and then only about a quarter of those hon. Members wishing to

speak were able to do so, and they were subject to the Whip? In the future, may we please have a three-day, open-ended debate, without the Whip?

Mr. MacGregor: It is customary to have the number of days that were allotted to the Queen's Speech debate. Part of those five days involved foreign affairs and other issues, when hon. Members could have raised the matters to which my hon. Friend refers. I endeavoured to find as much time as possible for the debate on the European Community, the run-up to Maastricht and the two intergovernmental draft treaties, and we extended the time to enable more hon. Members to get in. It is always a question of balance. I cannot give any guarantee about what we shall do in future.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House take urgent action to rearrange the business for Monday so that we may debate the redundancy laws which allow Rolls-Royce Motors Limited to send a motor cyclist courier scurrying around my constituency handing out redundancy notices at 11.30 at night, and British Rail Engineering Limited, a company created entirely through a bargain basement sale of taxpayers' assets, to lay off large numbers of skilled men and women without any proper consultation and without any hope of that company remaining viable in the future, if there should ever be a future in this country for trained builders?

Mr. MacGregor: While I do not wish to comment on the case to which the hon. Lady refers—because I do not know the details—I do not intend to rearrange the business for next Monday. We have important business to undertake on that day. The hon. Lady will know that questions concerning redundancies are for the company concerned. If it is felt that aspects of the procedures are not correct—I cannot comment on that because I do not know—that is clearly a matter for a tribunal.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend really happy with the state of the Sunday trading laws and the announcements made by traders in the past few days? Should not the House deal with the matter speedily? Otherwise, it will be assumed that a suspending power is operating.

Mr. MacGregor: That is certainly not the case. We tried to deal with the matter speedily with a response to a private notice question and a statement yesterday. As the Prime Minister made clear a few moments ago, the House of Lords has referred one aspect of the issue before it to the European Court of Justice and we must now wait to see what the court says. That means that the law is currently unclear, as the Prime Minister said. Once we have received the view of the European Court of Justice and the House of Lords has considered it, the Government will make recommendations and proposals on those matters. The whole House recognises some of the difficulties of the existing law, and I thought that yesterday's exchanges showed the difficulties of reaching an agreement, as we found when we tried to deal with the matter in 1986.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I thank the Leader of the House for saying that there will be a debate next week on agriculture, which will be welcome, and for saying that there will be a debate on fisheries before the European Council meeting.

As we are about to have a statement on NHS trust hospitals in Wales, may we expect a statement next week from the Secretary of State for Scotland on applications for NHS trust hospitals in Scotland? Many of us feel that, with overwhelming opposition from doctors, consultants, nurses, hospital staff and the communities served by those hospitals, the matter should be open and shut: those trust hospitals should not go ahead. Why is the Secretary of State delaying the matter?

Mr. MacGregor: Those are important matters and the Secretary of State for Scotland is giving proper consideration to the recommendations that have been put to him. I cannot give a precise date, but I know that my right hon. Friend is anxious to make a statement as soon as he has made a decision, which I hope will be fairly soon.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at early-day motion 287?

[That this House notes with concern the intention of the Lord Advocate to instruct procurators fiscal generally not to prosecute men involved in homosexual activity with young males aged between 16 and 21 years; notes that this is an arbitrary lowering of the homosexual age of consent in Scotland which has not been debated by Parliament; considers that such a policy will put adolescent males and females at risk; and calls on the Secretary of State for Scotland to request the Lord Advocate to enforce the law.]

It refers to a change in the law in Scotland without it having been debated carefully in the House and a decision taken. May we have an early opportunity to debate this fundamental issue, which causes considerable concern?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, prosecution policy in Scotland is exclusively a matter for the Lord Advocate, who has directed a review of prosecution policy in Scotland in that area of the law. That review has not concluded and the Lord Advocate expects to give guidance to procurators fiscal in the near future in relation to policy on certain aspects of the prosecution of homosexual acts which are criminal offences.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Will the right hon. Gentleman make a statement to the House as to whether he is making any progress in setting up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to what I have already said on that matter in the House.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will my right hon. Friend make an early statement on the outcome of his welcome study on the hours, procedures and facilities of the House? Has he had time to reflect on whether it may be for the good order of our proceedings to have rules about facilities such as the Tea Room and the behaviour of Members?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that that point comes within the Select Committee's remit, although I have noticed some comments on that subject today and I think that it is for hon. Members to observe decorum. The Committee is proceeding extremely well and working hard on its remit. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have responded considerably to the questionnaire and many of us have already given evidence. I hope that the Committee can come forward with recommendations in

[Mr. MacGregor]

good time for the House to debate them and perhaps even take decisions on them, but that is a matter for the Committee.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to the finding of a fair employment tribunal in Northern Ireland that the display of a likeness of Her Majesty at the workplace in Northern Ireland is discrimatory, and therefore illegal, and will have to be removed by the employers? Does it not follow from that finding that Her Majesty's portrait will have to be removed from all Government buildings in Northern Ireland? May we expect a statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on that?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not aware of that matter, but I will discuss it with my right hon. Friend.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend noticed in recent years the increasing use of the Order Paper for personal attacks on hon. Members and the way in which some hon. Members are interfering in the constituencies of others, a habit which is not confined to one side of the House? While I appreciate that my right hon. Friend cannot do anything on the business next week, will he join me in deploring this abuse of the Order Paper?

Mr. MacGregor: That is a matter which might be considered by other Committees of the House. I shall certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said. I agree that there have always been conventions which have, on the whole, been well observed in relation to hon. Members raising issues related to other Members' constituencies.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May we have a debate next week on law and order? We could then ask why—this follows on from the question of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) about hon. Members talking about other Members' constituencies—Maria Jones, who is 31 weeks pregnant, was sentenced at the beginning of this week to 60 days imprisonment for inability to pay the poll tax in Gloucestershire, despite her offers to pay £5 per week out of her £42 benefit? We are given lectures on the sanctity of the law and told that "the law is the law", but when stores such as B and Q open on a Sunday they receive letters from the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Tory party thanking them for memorable and enjoyable evenings at Conservative party conference balls. Is it not true that it is not what one does but who one knows? If the right hon. Gentleman does not like the jibe that the Government have been bought and paid for, perhaps he will arrange a debate to discuss the subject.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know about the individual case involving the community charge, but a debate would be totally unnecessary because the hon. Gentleman's charges about the company he mentioned and the allegations that he implied are absolutely untrue. I wish to make it clear that I totally reject them. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time, the problem in relation to Sunday trading is that the law is now unclear as a result of the referral to the European Court of Justice by the House of Lords. That is the clear distinction between Sunday trading and other issues such as the community charge, where the law is clear.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Without wishing to associate myself with what has just been said by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), may I ask my right hon. Friend to think again about a debate on Sunday trading? Whatever may not be clear, two factors are crystal clear. Does my right hon. Friend agree, first, that the intention of the law was clear and specific and, secondly, that those people who are violating the law are deliberately holding Parliament in contempt, which is intolerable?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that that is an accurate description of the current position. I believe that it was made clear yesterday that the law is now unclear and we are awaiting the House of Lords ruling following referral of one aspect of the issue to the European Court.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House say more about the timing of a statement on hospital opt-outs in Scotland? Is he aware that the Scottish Health Minister intimated on television in Scotland that a statement would be made before the end of the month? If the Leader of the House will not abide by that, will he at least give a guarantee that the statement will be made in public in this place and not sneaked out to one of the few remaining Tory lapdogs on the Back Benches?

Mr. MacGregor: Two things are clear: first, there will not be a statement before the end of this week and, secondly, the statement will be made in the House.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Was my right hon. Friend really saying in a reply to an earlier question that, if an appeal has gone to the European Court via the House of Lords, meanwhile the law should not be enforced even when there is a determined intention to break that law on a wholesale scale between now and Christmas?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I am not saying that. I was making a comment on the uncertainty of the law. As for prosecutions under the Shops Act 1950, Parliament has made it clear that that is a matter for local authorities to decide.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the pressure developing among some countries for an end to the ban by the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species on world trade in elephant ivory? Will he make it clear that Her Majesty's Government totally oppose the ending of that world trade ban? May we have a debate on elephant conservation and other animal welfare issues?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's position is clear. It is not necessary to have a debate on the matter, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point about apparent pressure from other countries to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I support other hon. Members' requests for a debate on Sunday trading. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us who failed to catch Mr. Speaker's eye on the private notice question and the statement yesterday are strongly in favour of people in a free society being able to choose whether they shop or trade on Sunday, and that we should have liked to point

out that many Opposition Members have a considerable financial interest, as they are sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and other unions, which should be declared before they oppose Sunday trading?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is certainly right that hon. Members hold a variety of views on the matter. It is not necessary to have a debate on the matter to reveal once again that obvious point, which was made clear in 1986 and which is why at that time Parliament failed to change the law.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On that matter, is it not true that the chairman of the executive committee of the national union of the Conservative party and the chairman of the Shop Hours Reform Council are one and the same person, Sir Basil Feldman? Is he not the man who is advocating all this law breaking, and is it not about time that he resigned his position from one of those bodies?

Mr. MacGregor: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would agree that, just as hon. Members can express their views on particular aspects of policy, so may citizens outside.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be helpful if we could confine questions to business next week.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is there a possibility of changing the business on one day next week to allow the House to debate inflation, which would give us the opportunity to congratulate the Government on their success in bringing inflation down to 3·7 per cent. while at the same time pointing out how damaging the Opposition's high spending, high taxation, high inflation policies would be, being bound to lead to massive unemployment and social discontent of the order that we had in the past?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree, and I could add other matters such as the danger to employment prospects of a national minimum wage. It is not necessary to change next week's business to do that, however, as I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will be making precisely that point in the debate next Thursday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): May we have a statement from the Home Secretary early next week about Le Pen's proposed visit and an explanation why such a fascist, racist agitator is being allowed into Britain? Before we are given lectures about free speech, as there are laws in Britain about incitement to race hatred, should not the leader of the National Front in France be told clearly that he will not be allowed to come into Britain on the ground that it would not be conducive to the public good?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows, as has been made clear before, that Mr. Le Pen's views on racial matters are totally rejected by the Government, but given his position as an elected member of the European Parliament and of the French National Assembly, to ban his entry would be a radical step. Our present view is that the evidence so far does not justify the exercise of the Home Secretary's powers of exclusion.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the result of the present GATT negotiations, which I understand have reached a delicate stage, is important to the British textile industry. Since many people are worried about the outcome, will he find time for a debate which would give us an opportunity to put many of their views forward?

Mr. MacGregor: I well understand my hon. Friend's point in relation to the textile industry, but I am sure that she will also agree that the current GATT Uruguay round is extremely important for many other reasons. We must all hope that agreement is reached on the matter and that the round can finally be concluded by the end of this year. In the meantime, as my hon. Friend will know, all GATT parties have agreed to extend the multi-fibre arrangement to the end of 1992 on existing terms, and the EC is renewing bilateral agreements for one year on that basis, which protects the position for the time being. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend says, but I cannot promise a debate. We must all hope that the negotiations will have a successful outcome.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): If the Leader of the House cannot make time for a debate on Sunday trading, will he make time to debate the sacking from the New York *Irish People* of a journalist who wrote an article condemning the attack on Musgrave Park hospital in my constituency? That would give the House an opportunity to make abundantly plain that NORAID is not a benefactor to anyone in Northern Ireland but an IRA support group. It would also give American Congressmen and others an opportunity to take a stand for civil rights in their country.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not read the article in question, but I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman's final two points. I am sure that the whole House does so, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman had an opportunity today to make the position clear.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): My right hon. Friend will be aware that at a late hour last night the House debated the European Community budget. He may not be aware that, of the 90 minutes allocated, no fewer than 65 minutes were taken up by the speeches of the two Front Bench spokesmen, leaving Back Benchers only 25 minutes to discuss that incredibly important subject. I can tell my right hon. Friend that there was a deep sense of anger among Back Benchers at the way in which our time was limited. That anger was felt not only on both sides of the Chamber, but by Euro-sceptics and Euro-integrationists alike. In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend consider making more time available during the current week to debate again the European Community budget and its implications?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and other right hon. and hon. Members were unable to participate in last night's debate. I will bear in mind my hon. Friend's comments about the length of speeches. I remind the House that we have just had a two-day debate on European Community matters. I followed pretty well the normal practice in relation to last night's budget debate. A slightly longer period was available last year, but on this occasion I had to bear in mind our recent two-day debate. I also took into account the fact that next week the House will have a further full

[Mr. MacGregor]

day's debate on the common agricultural policy, which takes up about 65 per cent. of the Community budget. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who could not participate last night will be able to speak in next week's debate.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 173 on South Africa.

[That this House welcomes the convening of an all-party conference in South Africa to prepare the basis for a new democratic and non-racial constitutional order based on one person, one vote in South Africa; expresses the hope that this will lead to rapid agreement on the establishment of an interim government to rule South Africa during the period of transition; and urges Her Majesty's Government to use its influence with its partners in the European Community and the Commonwealth as well as in the United Nations to achieve an international consensus in favour of such an agreement.]

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman and the House agree that there have been significant developments in South Africa, such as the convening of the all-party conference at the end of this week and again later in December. When Nelson Mandela attends the United Nations General Assembly next week, it may pass a consensus resolution which has existed since 1979. A similar resolution may be passed at Maastricht. Those developments are probably as significant as the release of Nelson Mandela and ought to be the subject of debate, as early-day motion 173 suggests. Will the Leader of the House allow time for that?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's position in relation to constitutional talks and other developments is clear. We hope that they will start as soon as possible, and are encouraged that negotiations may begin before the end of this year. We shall continue, with our Community partners, to use our influence to encourage South Africa's transition to a non-racial, democratic society. As I cannot find time for a debate next week, the hon. Gentleman will have to raise that issue in other ways. Nevertheless, the Government's position has been made clear on many occasions recently in the House.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): May I help my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House by giving him some advice on the subject of next week's business? If the House had more debates and less legislation, many of the points made to my right hon. Friend by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House—for example, in relation to the EC budget debate—could be met.

I support the plea made in all parts of the House for a debate next week on Sunday trading. It is not good enough for my right hon. Friend to say that it is up to local government to decide whether to take legal action, when the big supermarket chains have threatened to take local authorities to the cleaners on costs if the authorities lose their cases. There is a Shops Act on the statute book. Until it is taken off the statute book or amended, the Government should condemn the action of those large supermarkets.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made it clear that I do not think that there will be time for a debate on the Shops Act next week.

As for my hon. Friend's opening comments, I analysed the amount of time spent on Government legislation on the Floor of the House before I gave my personal evidence to the Procedure Committee. It was interesting to note that about 25 per cent. of the time is taken up with legislation, while 75 per cent. is devoted to general matters. At this time of year, when we are anxious to get the legislative process going and the Bills into Committee, there is rather more concentration on legislation. That is inevitable, and it places some constraint on general debates.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 270, entitled "Mr. Tindall's national insurance contributions"?

[That this House is dismayed that a person can work for 37 years and pay full national insurance contributions, be made redundant due to a pit closure, then in two subsequent years obtain full national insurance credits, topped up only with four voluntary contributions, suffer a heart attack and then be refused consideration for invalidity benefit on the grounds that he does not have sufficient contributions or credits to his name; notes that this has happened to Mr. Tindall of 69 Staniforth Avenue, Highwood Park, Eckington, Derbyshire, because he went on a fortnight's holiday in 1988 after being badly advised at an unemployment benefit office, thus cutting across three weeks during which he could otherwise have signed on for work and that he also started work in the final week of the 1988-89 tax year and thereby lost a further credit; notes that Mr. Tindall made voluntary payments to cover these four "missing" weeks but that these contributions can only be used for pension purposes and not for invalidity benefit considerations; further notes that Mr. Tindall cannot qualify for income support due to his wife's modest earnings; believes that a great injustice has been done due to the inflexibility of current Government rules; and calls for the necessary changes in the regulations forthwith.]

The motion is signed by me, and by 70 of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Tindall paid full contributions for 37 years. After being made redundant from the pit, he received full credits over two years, topped up by four voluntary contributions. After a heart attack, he is not eligible even to be considered for invalidity benefit. He cannot obtain any income allowance, because his wife is working as a nurse.

Should we not discuss the silly regulations which prevent Mr. Tindall and others in his position from being considered for invalidity and other benefits?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the terms of the early-day motion. I have not had an opportunity to study the case, but I will draw the motion to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Can my right hon. Friend find time soon for another debate on the question of security in Northern Ireland in the light of what has been revealed following last night's assassination attempt on the family of Dr. Laurence Kennedy, which was carried out simply because Dr. Kennedy wishes to stand as a parliamentary candidate?

It was announced this morning that the police had been prevented from questioning the four would-be assassins, who were caught red-handed, by the simple device of a solicitor's asking for a judicial review before they were

questioned. The position is serious. However much security we put into Northern Ireland in the form of efficient police action or even extra troops, it is no use if they cannot act quickly when they have a suspect in their hands.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the whole House was extremely concerned to learn of last night's attack on Dr. Kennedy's home, and will wish to express its congratulations on the way in which the family responded and its relief that they escaped injury. I will draw the specific point raised by my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Leader of the House promise us a statement on Monday about the sale of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in Cardiff to its new Dutch owners, which I believe is to take place at the weekend? How many experienced civil servants are to be sent home on gardening leave pending their new employment? Will he also tell us whether the rumours flying around the Cardiff department are correct? It is said that the sale price to the new Dutch owners, and the receipts to the taxpayer, are nowhere near the £100 million to £150 million that was promised during the passage of the legislation, and may be only a peppercorn £5 million or £6 million.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise a statement on Monday, because we have a heavy load of business on that day, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on constitutional affairs next week? He may be aware that hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the extraordinary statement that the leader of the Liberal Democrat party made last week, when he said that his party no longer accepted the sovereignty of Parliament.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is referring, I suspect, to a referendum. The position of the Government and, I think, of the Labour party has been made clear on that. My hon. Friend makes an interesting point on the stance that the Liberal Democrats appear to have taken. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] Unfortunately, none of them is here to explain their stance, but I hope that there will be opportunities to explore the matter in forthcoming weeks.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Has my right hon. Friend noticed how the appetite of the Opposition Front Bench for debates on health care has diminished sharply as the good news continues to roll in about national health service trusts giving better care for patients and better value for money in the health service? Is he aware that senior medical staff at Queen's medical centre in Nottingham voted overwhelmingly to try to obtain trust status in the next wave, thus defeating Labour's disgraceful smears and scares which sought deliberately to frighten elderly and vulnerable people into believing falsehoods about the NHS?

Mr. MacGregor: I have, indeed, noticed the point that my hon. Friend makes and he is entirely right about the success of our reforms. I hope that we shall find many other opportunities—perhaps very soon—to continue to convey the good news.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May I support the plea for an early debate on London? Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members would like to point out which London councils have the highest community charges, the most uncollected rent, the worst school results and the largest number of empty council houses and that the Government are giving much more money to London Transport than the Labour-controlled GLC ever gave?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, who may be able to make some of those points in next week's debate on the economy. They are certainly relevant to the economy in London and he is right to draw attention to the damaging policies of Labour councils.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Further to the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), may we discuss at an early opportunity the progress on hospital trust status and on the Government's health reforms? That would give me an opportunity to praise my own excellent health authority, which is not only one of the 30 most efficient in the country and has two hospitals applying for phase 3 trust status, but plans to amalgamate with nearby Bromsgrove health authority to diminish administrative costs, reduce duplication and put the money saved into patient care.

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that my hon. Friend has been able to make that point. I hope to find opportunities for him to make the same points about his constituency and for other right hon. and hon. Friends to make similar points about theirs.

National Health Service (Wales)

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the national health service in Wales.

I am pleased to be able to announce to the House next year's Government expenditure on health and personal social services in Wales. Funding will increase by a massive £186 million, taking national health service spending in Wales to further record levels in real terms. My proposals mean that national health service expenditure in Wales will be boosted to £651 a year for every man, woman and child in Wales, or, put another way, more than £2,600 for a family of four.

The Government are determined to ensure that health in Wales is accorded the highest possible priority. The figures reflect our personal commitment—and my commitment in particular—to secure the investment for health care in Wales that will enable the national health service to go forward from strength to strength.

Our commitment to the national health service cannot be clearer. We are giving it the support that it needs to move forward quickly on the imaginative and exciting course on which it is embarked. But that support is not limited just to words: I am backing my judgment with cash and at record levels.

Planned provision for the national health service in Wales will increase to £1,877 million next year. That compares with the figure in 1979-80 of £481 million. That is £1,877 million against £481 million—the record speaks for itself. Of the £1,877 million, £1,420 million is earmarked for hospital, community health and related services. This includes the costs arising from Welsh patients who travel to England for treatment following the new charging arrangements.

The new money that the Government are making available will provide the national health service in Wales with an increase of 11·1 per cent. on comparable expenditure plans for this year. In addition, health authorities will keep as a minimum an extra £13 million generated by cash-releasing efficiency savings.

I expect to announce allocations to health authorities next month, but I can say today that my proposals will enable them to continue to plan with confidence for the health care needs of the people of Wales. They will be in a position to increase activity significantly next year and this will maintain downward pressure on waiting times. In addition, capital allocations will provide for the building of new hospitals and the uprating and expansion of existing units.

I also wish to refer to the development of national health service trusts in Wales. Pembrokeshire health authority formally applied to become a national health service trust on 16 July and the statutory consultation period ended on 31 October. Taking account of the views received, alongside the individual merits of the application, I have decided to establish the Pembrokeshire national health service trust with an operational date of 1 April 1992. The order giving effect to this decision has been made today and the trust will commence "shadow" running on 16 December.

Pembrokeshire will be the first trust in Wales and, I believe, clearly shows the way forward for the future delivery of health care. I am on record with my pledge that applications for trust status in Wales will not be approved unless I personally am convinced that patients will benefit.

Local people can be justifiably proud of the NHS in Pembrokeshire and I am confident that the trust will generate even stronger links within the community in responding to present and future health care needs. The local identity of the national health service trust will be reinforced by a board drawn from local people and led by Mr. A. J. G. Bowen.

Elsewhere in Wales, NHS trusts are progressively being seen as the natural organisational model for patient care. They bring the management of health services closer to the local communities and respond directly to local needs. When I met health authority chairmen last week, they reported that they expected a significant number of expressions of interest to be lodged to become national health service trusts in 1993. They expect that they will account for nearly half our major patient care providers in Wales. I expect shortly to announce the details of hospitals and other health service units invited to proceed to draw up applications.

As part of the consultative arrangements on the trust application, I had proposed separately the creation of a new West Wales health authority. In the form suggested, this proposal had only limited support locally and, in recognition of this, I have decided not to proceed with the new authority. As a consequence, Pembrokeshire and East Dyfed health authorities will be retained, with Captain Phillips remaining as chairman of Pembrokeshire. However, I shall be looking to both health authorities and the Dyfed family health services authority to work closely together in developing clear strategies to identify and then meet local needs. The residents of Pembrokeshire will expect no less.

A further growing development in the NHS in Wales is the creation of GP fund holders. I have already given details of the seven practices established as fund holders in April this year. I can now tell the House that a further 19 practices have successfully applied for fund-holding status from 1 April 1992. Final decisions rest with the GPs involved, but I will provide in due course details of the practices which will formally become GP fund holders in 1992.

Those developments and the extra resources that I announced earlier will enable the NHS in Wales to respond positively to the challenges of the future. The Principality can look forward with confidence, secure in the knowledge that our vision of the future is founded on a greater range of services, more opportunities for individual choice, and even higher standards of care for everyone.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): We know what the right hon. Gentleman is attempting. He is putting his sugared financial announcement on a bitter trust pill. On the finances, we have seen it all before. During the run-in to the general election there is a little more money, but do not Conservative cuts come after a general election victory, if they have one?

The key part of the statement was about trusts. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that more than 2,500 people are waiting longer than one month for urgent surgery—more than 12,000 are waiting more than a year

—and that more than 86,000 are waiting for a first out-patient appointment. That is after the Conservative Government have been in power for 12 years.

The right hon. Gentleman has just said:

"Pembrokeshire will be the first trust in Wales and, I believe, clearly shows the way forward for the future delivery of health care."

With that sentence he threatens Wales. It is symbolic. Clearly, hospital trusts are to be the norm if the Government are re-elected.

The statement that we have just heard is one of the most disgraceful and extraordinary ever to be made by a Secretary of State for Wales. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that time and again the Conservative vision of a commercialised internal market in patients with opt-out trust hospitals competing for patient contracts has always been rejected by the people of Wales. Why, even with the spectre of general election annihilation before them, are Welsh Office Ministers persisting with that discredited plan?

The statement shows again that the national health service is not safe in Conservative hands. Does the Secretary of State accept that the opt-out proposals for a Pembrokeshire trust are nothing more than an elaborate con job paid for by a £50,000 Welsh Office sweetener? Will he admit that the trust, and any other trusts, will be unaccountable to the local community and will take, in secrecy, behind closed doors, crucial decisions on health care for Pembrokeshire? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the process of creating trusts in Wales will be stopped by an incoming Labour Secretary of State for Wales and that any hospital that has already opted out before the general election will be brought back under the management of the local health authority?

What the right hon. Gentleman has said today will never be accepted by the people of Wales. When the general election takes place, the right hon. Gentleman and his contemptible proposals will be swept away.

Mr. Hunt: On the first point about funding, the hon. Gentleman said that he had seen it all before. He has seen it all before under this Government, but he did not see it when Labour was last in office. I remind him of the figures. In 1979-80, we spent in the national health service——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Give us the waiting list figures.

Mr. Hunt: I will come to those.

In 1979-80, we spent in the national health service £170 for every man, woman and child in Wales. If spending this year was at the same level, uprated to take account of inflation, we would now be spending at the rate of £392 for every man, woman and child. The actual figure this year is £614 and, under my proposals, it will go up to £651—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like the figures, but they cannot dispute that the figure for spending in 1979-80 was £481 million in cash terms. My announcement increases it in real terms by 60 per cent.

Under the previous Labour Government, the number of new out-patients treated fell by 3 per cent. Under this Government, the increase between 1979 and 1990-91 has been 29 per cent. Between 1974 and 1979 under Labour, the number of in-patient cases went up by 6 per cent. Under this Government, the figure has gone up by 39 per cent. and the number of patients being treated is now at a record level.

The hon. Gentleman said that the first trust threatened Wales and he used the phrase "opt out". We had all that in the Monmouth by-election. That phrase has scared many people in Wales. Opposition Members were more interested in scaring than in caring. I visited Nevill Hall hospital last week, where I found that the people are very satisfied with the national health service in Wales. I reminded people that in 1979, 1983 and 1987, the Labour party said that the health service was not safe in the hands of a Conservative Government. The latest poll shows that 93 per cent. of people are satisfied with the health service.

Of course we must not see hospitals opting out of the national health service; that has never been the intention. I want national health service trusts which mean that management gets closer to the people. The hon. Gentleman said that the trust was unpopular. Since my visit to Nevill Hall, there has been a by-election in a Labour seat in Abergavenny and the seat has been won by the Conservatives. That carries a message to the Labour party.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): The extra money for the health service in Wales is an inflation-busting announcement which will be welcomed in the Principality. It will mean that our very good health service will be able to expand in quality and in quantity.

I welcome the trust status for Pembrokeshire. We have heard the most disgraceful claims, made for electoral reasons, that hospitals will close or basic health facilities will be denied, but the people who have really studied the matter in the interests of the patients—the community health council, the staff and the doctors—have come out in favour of trust status. That proves that the opportunity for trust status means that decisions will be taken locally in the interests of local people.

Mr. Hunt: I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend said about funding and I have cited the revenue figures. Let us look at what happened to capital in the health service under Labour. Whereas capital has increased substantially under this Government, in real terms between 1974-75 and 1979-80 it went down by £11·7 million. No wonder Opposition Members are so silent.

As for trusts, I totally agree with my hon. Friend, but I am not prepared to approve an application for a unit, a hospital or an authority to become a national health service trust unless I am satisfied that that will lead to better and more local management and a better range and quality of service to patients, with clinicians involved in key management posts and better patient care.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Secretary of State's announcement on NHS trusts for Pembrokeshire and possible proposals that may come from elsewhere in Wales show that we are to have a two-tier health service—those who get the service and those who get a second-class service? At Nevill Hall hospital, which also serves my constituency, the consultants and staff are opposed to trust status. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether he has received any proposals from that hospital for NHS trust status and whether he will grant it?

Mr. Hunt: I am concerned that the Liberal party has not welcomed the funding announcement. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) has not said anything at all about it. Members of Parliament always

[Mr. Hunt]

call for more money, but, when I come to the House and bring record sums with me, I get no welcome. On the trust point, of course we will not have a two-tier health service in Wales. I want every national health service trust to remain within the family of the national health service. I want every national health service trust to provide patient care which will remain free at the point of delivery. I want every national health service trust to remain funded out of general taxation as it is at present. That is the position. That is not a two-tier service; it is a better service.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is it not well nigh incredible that, after the manifest collapse of command economies in eastern Europe—a collapse that was precipitated by the absence of any market mechanism to demonstrate where resources are needed—the Labour party should continue to oppose the use of market mechanisms within a truly free national health service in order to show precisely where resources can best be used? Did my right hon. Friend, during his triumphantly successful visit to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in my constituency, note the general satisfaction of patients, staff and doctors with the changes that have been brought about, and did he note the utter baselessness of the charges that have been brought by the National Union of Public Employees about changes in that hospital?

Mr. Hunt: I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend said. I enjoyed my visit to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd yesterday. I found a very positive attitude by all the people whom I met and I met many patients. I opened the new foyer, which was built in response to a questionnaire that the hospital had carried out among patients to see what they wanted to be improved.

Mr. Barry Jones: It is here in this newspaper.

Mr. Hunt: No, I am now talking about the truth that my hon. Friend has put forward. That foyer was very much what the public wanted. I provided special additional money for it. The league of friends, the local volunteers with whom I was extremely impressed——

Mr. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should listen and pay tribute to the league of friends. The league of friends raised £50,000 specifically to improve the foyer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman visits that hospital, too, because he will find general satisfaction. The surgical ward is now scheduled for redecoration. At that hospital, several hundred more operations have been performed than at this time last year.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Secretary of State mentioned that his aim was to bring management closer to the people. He also announced that East Dyfed health authority would remain and that there would be no West Wales health authority. Is he aware that, as a result of the Government's vindictive and often partisan appointments to health authority boards, there is no representative, and has not been for some time, from the Lanelli area on East Dyfed health authority, yet Llanelli is the only major industrial area in all west Wales? Will the right hon. Gentleman now make good his statement about management being closer to the people and appoint someone from the Llanelli area to the board of East Dyfed health authority?

Mr. Hunt: We have to have the most able people serving on the health authorities. If the hon. Gentleman can provide any names, I am perfectly prepared to consider them—*[Interruption.]* Well, I shall simply tell the hon. Gentleman that under the last Labour Government —[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] Yes, it is pretty disgraceful for the hon. Gentleman not to pay tribute to the fact that, thanks to the Conservatives, there is a new hospital in Llanelli, the Prince Philip hospital.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The right hon. Gentleman chided the Liberal party for not welcoming his increased expenditure, but will he tell the House the comparable figure for actual expenditure last year, because he compared the figure that he announced today with last year's expenditure plans? Will he use the actual figure for the comparison to see whether that shows an 11 per cent. increase? Does he accept that, whatever he says today, he and his party have lost the political debate over the future of the health service in Wales and that, whether he likes it or not, his announcement today will be seen as extremely divisive? Does he accept that the public see the setting up of national health service trusts as one step away from privatisation? Is not that the case?

Mr. Hunt: No, not at all. I suppose, however, that I have gained something because one Opposition Member actually said the other day that the proposals are halfway to privatisation, so I have managed to move the Opposition halfway. I hope, however, that hon. Members will soon realise that this has nothing to do with privatisation. As far as I am concerned—as far as the Government are concerned—the health service will not be privatised. The hon. Gentleman said that I chided the Liberal party, but I now chide Plaid Cymru for not welcoming my announcement——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I did welcome the announcement——

Mr. Hunt: No; if the hon. Gentleman looks at *Hansard* he will see that he did not actually say that he welcomed it. He questioned some of the figures. The 11·1 per cent. is an increase on the provision for this year and an 8·2 per cent. increase on the outturn. When the hon. Gentleman bears in mind the fact that inflation is 3·7 per cent. and notes the increase since 1979-80, he will recognise that these are substantial increases which represent 60 per cent. more in real terms.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Secretary of State may not realise that I regularly read the Pembrokeshire newspapers which, during the past few months, have contained many letters about the trust application, most of which—in fact, the large majority —have been hostile to it. May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to an opinion poll that was conducted by the *Western Telegraph* last August, which showed that 85 per cent. of that newspaper's readers opposed the Pembrokeshire trust application? Why does not the Secretary of State listen to the people of Pembrokeshire? Does he realise that his foolish decision

today will cost the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), his seat at the next election?

Mr. Hunt: I, too, read the Pembrokeshire newspapers and constantly see praise of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—[HON. MEMBERS: "In his own column."]—not only in his own column, but elsewhere in the newspapers. I am keeping a careful watch on the situation to which the hon. Gentleman has referred and I hope that he will recognise that there are polls and polls. When the legislation was going through the House, there was a long debate about whether local polls should be held and the House decided against that. Of course, we must take the right decision for the sake of all the patients in the health service. I sincerely believe that what I have announced today is a move in that direction.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will know that the opt-out process for schools involved at least a partial, if flawed, consultation process. Is not he ashamed that there is no provision at all in this process for accountability or consultation? Is he aware —he must be—that we are already approaching a general election campaign and that the hospitals that have decided to bow to Welsh Office pressure on this matter are effectively intervening in a partisan way in what will be one of the major issues of that general election campaign? Will he therefore give an undertaking that Nevill Hall, which, despite the right hon. Gentleman's visit, has decided not to seek opt-out trust status, and Morriston hospital and others, which have not set out recklessly on that path, will not face any reprisals from the Conservative party until the election?

Mr. Hunt: There were about 10 wrong assertions in what the hon. Gentleman just said. I cannot possibly deal with them all if I am to allow other people to ask questions. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would stop using the phrase "opt-out". A leaflet is going round, issued by Support the Wales TUC, called "Defend the NHS". It says:

"Opting out. Throw out opt-out."

On the second page it says:

"Street ballots are to be held across West Glamorgan as a means of offering the public the opportunity to show their opposition to opting out."

That sort of ballot is bogus.

There is no opting out. I am prepared to approve a national health service trust only as long as I am satisfied that it will lead to better patient care and that it will remain within the national health service. There is no pressure from the Welsh Office. It is up to the local hospital to reach the decision.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that I have opposed his trust proposals for a long time and I believe that the majority of my constituents in North Pembrokeshire are against such a trust. Now that the Secretary of State has made the decision, I wish the trust the best of luck in the years to come in the interests of the people of Pembrokeshire. I compliment the staff, the nurses and everyone involved with Withybush hospital.

Can the Secretary of State give an assurance to the rest of the people in Dyfed that he will not form another trust until the Pembrokeshire trust has completed a three-year trial run to determine whether the trust status now on offer to the people of Pembrokeshire is a success?

Mr. Hunt: I accept the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said. It was a recognition of the reality. As I understand it, the local community health council in Pembrokeshire decided to support the application for NHS trust status. So did the staff and the consultants. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) talked about a lack of consultation, but there was a clear expression of view.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) talked about the future. I sincerely believe that NHS trusts are the way forward. They bring management closer to the people and the hospital. They allow hospitals to be independent of any outside bureaucracy, to make their own decisions and to have their own budget. That is why I certainly would not block any further applications.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Obviously, any extra money for the health service or any other public service, in Wales or anywhere, is to be welcomed. What we find most difficult to accept is the sanctimonious self-congratulation and the hyping up of the extent of the increase in the money provided. Of course, we know that the figures are bogus. For example, how much of the increase in spending is simply due to the extra number of old people and people getting older who need treatment in this decade compared with the 1970s? That is a significant part of the increase.

Secondly——

Mr. Speaker: One question please.

Mr. Hunt: I have already answered that point. Of course, some of the increase is to take account of increased need. I am arguing against the Labour party's constant accusations that the Conservative Government are making cuts. I analyse the figures on a per capita basis because that is one of the fairest ways. That we spent £170 per capita in 1979 is without challenge. It is the actual cash figure. Taking inflation into account, the figure would be £392 today. It is actually £614. It will be even higher as a result of my announcement today.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): As a result of the increase in funding that the Secretary of State announced today, can he guarantee that this year it will be possible to carry out 1,200 open heart operations in Wales? A commitment was made as long ago as 1984 by his predecessor, yet fewer than 800 operations are being carried out. If GP fund holders are able to buy that or any other service, will the Secretary of State guarantee that in no unit in Wales will it be possible for a consultant surgeon to discriminate against a non-fund holding GP in favour of a GP fund holder who has referred his or her patient to the hospital?

Mr. Hunt: On heart operations, I cannot give the guarantee for which the hon. Gentleman asked, but all district health authorities in Wales are signed up to reduce waiting lists and waiting times in this financial year and to continue that process in succeeding years. The latest evidence shows that activity levels in Wales will be 4 to 5 per cent. up on 1990-91 and that health authorities will meet the "agenda for action" targets for patients waiting more than one year for in-patient care, which is only 19 per cent. but is still too high. We want some improvement. We

[Mr. Hunt]

want to come close to the target for out-patients waiting more than three months for an appointment, which is 28 per cent.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. . . .

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Kim Howells.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry.

Dr. Howells: I am a shy and retiring violet.

Will the provision that has been made for extra funding be able to help the Taff Ely and Rhondda districts of Mid Glamorgan health authority, which is £900,000 overspent, and which faces the closure of wards in the coming winter, including ward 11, a children's ward, which has just been refurbished? The Secretary of State knows very well that that ward will soon be full of children with asthma and bronchial problems. How are they to manage if that money is not made available to them?

Mr. Hunt: Did I hear the hon. Gentleman say that he was retiring?

Dr. Howells: A retiring violet.

Mr. Hunt: On the serious remarks that he made, obviously it is up to the health authority to manage the budget that it receives. He should take up those areas of concern with the chairman of his health authority. However, will he again recognise that we are talking about record levels of funding? Today's announcement means an even higher record than before.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The Secretary of State for Wales is busily carving up the health service in Wales like a Christmas turkey. Is he aware that thousands of my constituents are flooding me with signatures on petitions which oppose the opting out of Neath hospital and its registration of an interest to start the application process? Will he arrange for a ballot to be conducted by Neath borough council and let the people of Neath have a voice in whether their hospital should opt out?

Mr. Hunt: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that not long ago he was congratulating me on having announced the new hospital in Neath. He cannot suddenly move from one extreme, which I welcome, to another, which I do not. Or, I suppose he can.

On ballots, I, too, would vote against opting out of the NHS, but that is not what is on the agenda and never has been.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): Will this new money—if it is new and is not vired from some other budget—help waiting lists, bearing in mind the fact that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned that the surgical ward in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd is to be closed for redecoration for six months? That is probably an inefficient way to decorate a ward. The surgical team who face that ward closure have been successful in reducing waiting lists until now, when the money has run out. Will the money help? Which waiting lists will it tackle? One gentleman in my constituency is having to wait 18 months to get on a waiting list. According to my reckoning, there are two waiting lists. Which one will it stop—the waiting to get on a waiting list or the 18 months' wait that that man has to face when he gets there?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know what point the hon. Gentleman is making. Today I announced overall funding for the NHS in Wales. I must admit to the House that I have put much more money into the NHS than was perhaps originally expected because I believe that that, and better patient care, are among my highest priorities as Secretary of State. I was determined to fulfil that obligation with the announcement. Having secured those additional funds, I must sit down and work out how to allocate them between health authorities. The hon. Gentleman will know about the extra millions of pounds that we have put into the waiting lists initiative. However, the purpose of the funding package that I announced is to reduce waiting times throughout Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the surest way to acquire a new hospital is to cause a by-election? Will he also agree that he still has a good deal of arguing to do to convince the people of Wales that the creation of a large number of hospital trusts is motivated by patients' interests rather than by his political beliefs?

Mr. Hunt: I wonder whether there is something I should know as to why the hon. and learned Gentleman is so favourably disposed towards by-elections. We would rise to the occasion with Jeanie France Heyhurst if he decided to step down. There would be an extremely good by-election campaign.

On national health trusts, I will approve an application only provided that the hospital, the unit and the authority will remain within the family of the NHS. There is no dogma here. I am proud of my commitment to the health service, which is evidenced by the record level of resources that we have announced today.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I can well believe that the national health service needs more money in Wales because there are many more administrators, computer operators and accountants in the service. No doubt the opted-out trusts will ensure that their board members pay themselves inflated salaries. Nevertheless, I welcome the extra money, if it is genuinely new money and is not taken from some other budget. What is the difference between the coming year, 1992, and 1987, 1983 and 1979, when more money was promised by the Conservative party and promises were made, only to be cruelly withdrawn after the elections in those years?

Mr. Hunt: There was just one little thing that the hon. Gentleman left out—to welcome the fact that, thanks to the Conservative Government, Wrexham Maelor hospital was built. That is something of which we are very proud.

On funding, of course this is extra cash for the NHS. The money will be allocated to the health authorities as soon as I am able to make further announcements. It will be greatly to the benefit of the health service and to patients. We have published a patients charter, we believe in better patient care, and what I have announced will greatly assist in bringing about that objective.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does not the Secretary of State recognise that the 11·1 per cent. increase not only becomes the 8·2 per cent. that he admitted to

when it is measured against expenditure, but becomes about 2 per cent. when measured against the real rate of inflation within the NHS and disappears altogether when care in the community is taken into account?

On an important constitutional point—I hope that he will take this seriously—whatever happens after the election we are in the dying months of this Parliament. There is a bitter doctrinal argument between the parties on trust status. Will he give an assurance that, whatever happens in present consultations on further trusts—I shall avoid the emotive term "opt-out"—and whatever their conclusion, he will leave it so that the Government appointed after the election can make a decision about whether there will be more trusts?

Mr. Hunt: Since 1979-80 funding for the NHS has increased in real terms by 60 per cent. That is a marvellous statistic and one which I shall use during the next general election.

Mr. Win Griffiths: That is not in real terms.

Mr. Hunt: No, it is a real-terms increase of 60 per cent. When the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was in government, funding increased by nowhere near that figure and capital spending decreased.

On trusts, we do not hear as much opposition in England to NHS trusts now. It has gone rather quiet because trusts have been rather successful. In Wirral the local Labour party first opposed every NHS application —that was at the behest of the unions, which were equally opposing them. Now throughout Wirral one will find general approval of trusts and they are nowhere near the party political football that the Labour party in Wales is still trying to suggest.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Secretary of State realise that this is not so much a statement as a press release? Does he not know that the increase about which he told us is inadequate to meet the needs, especially with the increasing numbers of the elderly in our population, and year after year falls back compared with all comparable countries? Why does so much money go on gimmicks, such as the £203,000 on his so-called charter for health in Wales, with cash going to a firm in Northampton and an appalling and unproductive paper chase in this so-called market in care?

Cannot the Secretary of State understand the message from the 93 per cent. of people in Wales who are satisfied with the NHS and do not want the muddle and meddle of his trusts and opt-out policy? What is unpopular is the proposal to take the health service in Pembrokeshire into a trust. It is as unpopular in Pembrokeshire as is the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), the obsessed architect of all that we despise about Conservative policies on health in Wales.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the Conservatives broke the consensus on health in Wales and that the trust idea will and must be scrapped—if not by him, by the people of Wales at the general election?

Mr. Hunt: There was some sweet music among the discordant notes. In previous health service debates the hon. Gentleman has come to the Dispatch Box and said that there have been cuts in the health service and there was great dissatisfaction in Wales with the Conservatives. Now is a wonderful moment. He has come to the Dispatch Box and said that 93 per cent. of the people in Wales are satisfied with the Conservative administration of the health service.

Mr. Michael: No, I did not say that.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman did not include the words, "Conservative administration of". He said that 93 per cent. were satisfied with the national health service in Wales. I welcome that.

On the hon. Gentleman's discordant notes, I want to ensure that the record levels of funding now announced are targeted in the best possible way for the patients. I want to see a health service that is better managed and where the staff are paid properly.

I have one last fact and statistic for the House. When Labour was last in power, the pay of nurses, midwives and health visitors fell in real terms by 21·1 per cent. and of hospital doctors and dentists by 9·9 per cent. Under this Government, from 1979 to 1991 pay has increased for nurses, midwives and health visitors by 48·7 per cent. and for hospital doctors and dentists by 28·7 per cent. No wonder the hon. Gentleman says that the Conservative Government are running the health service well. We are determined to do even better and my announcement today will enable us to do so.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

BROADCASTING

That the draft Broadcasting (Programme Contractors' Additional Payments) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill, in particular clause 1, is to increase the statutory financial limit for the Welsh Development Agency from the present level of £700 million to £950 million. The limit was last raised by the Welsh Development Agency Act 1988, and present forecasts suggest that the limit will be reached during 1992-93. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the limit now, so as not to inhibit the agency's contribution to the redevelopment of the Welsh economy.

Under section 18 of the Welsh Development Act 1975, a number of items count towards the financial limit. First, there are the agency's general external borrowings, mainly from the national loans fund. Secondly, there are agency and Treasury guarantees. Thirdly, there are overseas borrowings from, for example, the European Coal and Steel Community. The largest element, however, comprises the grant in aid, less administrative expenses, together with public dividend capital issues, both of which I make available annually to the agency.

It is customary when seeking parliamentary approval for increasing a financial limit to set a figure which will last for about five years. It is not customary to set it too high because this occasion gives us an opportunity to review the agency's activities and, in effect, have another debate on Welsh matters.

I see the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) in his seat. A group of English Members who were leaving the Chamber said to me, "You don't need a ruddy Welsh Assembly—you've turned this Parliament into a Welsh Parliament". This week, we have had a debate on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, an announcement on the health service in Wales and now a debate on the WDA, and next Monday we have Welsh questions.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State has tempted me to my feet, and I apologise for my voice. Does he agree that, if this is to be seen as a Welsh Parliament, we can have votes on matters relating to Wales restricted to Welsh Members?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should not be so insular. I was merely reporting what was said to me; I did not give my views.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Mon): What are they?

Mr. Hunt: I do not think that this has become a Welsh Parliament, but it is the mother of Parliaments. Hon. Gentlemen can intervene on any aspect of the agency's affairs, and I am happy to respond to any questions.

As I said, it is customary to cover a five-year period, so I propose that the limit should be £950 million. I should add, however, that this is a purely technical measure, with no implications for spending or policy decisions in future years. Such decisions will be taken in the normal way.

The agency's main aims are to further the economic development of Wales, to enhance the international competitiveness of Welsh business and to improve the environment of Wales. It pursues its objectives through a wide range of activities. They include the provision of modern factories and workshops, the promotion of inward investment and new technology, the provision of business advice and venture capital, land reclamation and, increasingly, urban renewal and environmental improvement. The goal is a dynamic, self-sustaining, private sector economy in Wales.

In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a new Wales—the transformation of our country. The process is not yet complete, but the changes have been profound and will be of lasting significance—certainly for Wales, but also more widely. As recently as 1979, Wales was dominated by declining nationalised industries. The inevitable closures saw unemployment rise from 67,000 in 1979 to 167,000 by 1986—more than doubling the rate of unemployment to 14 per cent. In parts of industrial Wales, people were faced with a stark legacy from their industrial past: high unemployment, a declining population, industrial dereliction and environmental pollution.

There has now been a dramatic improvement. Unemployment fell rapidly—it declined for 47 consecutive months—until the recent recessionary pressures in the United Kingdom economy took effect. Between 1985 and 1989, seasonally adjusted employment halved. The average rate of unemployment in Wales is now 9·2 per cent. I am pleased that unemployment in Wales fell again last month, but I remain to be convinced that we have moved into that trend again—I greatly hope so. There has been much growth in employment opportunities in the service sector as well as manufacturing.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Secretary of State is about to say that the WDA has been successful in attracting inward investment into the traditionally industrial parts of Wales, especially the south-east and north-east. I concur with that view. Will he confirm that it is the agency's remit to attract inward investment to areas that still have large pockets of unemployment, such as Holyhead and Fishguard, and that it is considering that matter carefully?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I do so confirm. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State kindly responded to a call that I received from a meeting in Anglesey, at which the hon. Gentleman was present, to appoint a supremo—someone to co-ordinate overall activity—to regenerate the economy of Anglesey. I am delighted to hear from my right hon. Friend that the WDA is spearheading a great deal of activity, and I am sure that he will wish to enlarge on those points later in the debate.

The index of output of manufacturing industries in Wales showed between 1985 and 1989 growth of over 30 per cent., compared with 15 per cent. for the United Kingdom as a whole. The numbers of firms in Wales in production industry, as shown by VAT registrations, rose by 64 per cent. in the same period, which is more than twice the United Kingdom average. The economy has diversified and is more flexible and robust, with tremendous potential for growth.

Those achievements represent a great tribute to the resilience and strength of the Welsh people. There is no doubt that Government policies in Wales and the work of Government Departments and agencies, such as the WDA, have played a crucial role, and continue to do so. Although I recognise the continuing difficulties, the Welsh economy is better placed than ever before to move forward to renewed growth.

I come to the contribution made by the WDA. It has been necessary to ensure that the agency is properly

funded to do the job. Since we came to office in 1979, the total gross expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency, at today's prices, has just gone through the £1 billion barrier. Those resources have been used to tremendous effect. In the last year alone, for example, the agency's direct factory-building programme provided an additional 1·2 million sq. ft. of industrial and commercial floor space. When fully let, that will provide space for about 3,500 jobs.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State speaks of the role of the WDA as a factory builder and, in that context, as a landlord. Will he ask the WDA to review its policy of selling off large tracts of its factories to major real estate agents rather than directly to the tenants? Is he aware that many tenants have been dissatisfied to find that the leases they held from the WDA have been sold to companies that have no connection with Wales and without them having been given the opportunity to buy them for themselves? Will he persuade the WDA to do otherwise?

Mr. Hunt: The WDA currently holds about 2,000 factories. Over 40,000 people are employed in them, so it is an important landlord, as the hon. Gentleman points out. In the last five years, the agency has conducted a programme of sales. It would be wrong for me to restrict the market, because the agency has raised more than £80 million from factory sales to private sector investors and individual tenants, and has reinvested the proceeds in Wales.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): It is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to talk about a budget of perhaps £166 million, but in the coming three years the grant in aid from the Welsh Office will drop from £80 million to £60 million. The maintenance of the budget depends on two forecasts—a huge hike in factory rents being forced on many tenants and a large sale of factory space. If one or both of those fails to occur on the scale projected, may we be assured that the Government will make up the difference to maintain the overall budget of the WDA?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman need only look at the record to see the facts. One must, of course, take into account current market conditions, and I have to be satisfied that the projections given to me by the WDA for sales are realistic. I am so satisfied. I am able to speak for next year, and I have made the position for next year absolutely clear. We have projected figures for the year after that, and the following year. I ask the hon. Gentleman to look at our record and to recognise that my predecessor and I have brought the budget of the WDA to a record level in real terms.

The right hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) must not forget that there are differing views on this issue on the Opposition Benches. Many hon. Members would like to see the WDA become less of a landlord and to sell on the open market much of its factory space.

Mr. Rowlands: And individual tenants?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, of course that includes individual tenants.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, when he can expand on the point he wishes to make.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer my question? The whole budget is predicated on the forecast of the sale of factory space. That will involve the sale this year of 74,000 sq m of factory space. To maintain the budget, that will have to rise to 300,000 sq m in the next two years. Whatever the rights or wrongs of that, may we have an assurance that any shortfall in the WDA budget will be made good by the Welsh Office?

Mr. Hunt: In putting together the budget, I must be satisfied that what are, after all, indicative figures are realistic and reasonable estimates. I am satisfied that they are realistic for next year, so the hon. Gentleman's point does not arise—*[Interruption.]* Although he does not think that they are realistic estimates, I have satisfied myself that they are. The figures have been given to me by the WDA.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The right hon. Gentleman must not mislead the House. He should be willing to admit that he tells the WDA what sort of target it must reach for reinvestment as a result of factory sales. We are referring to an idea that has come not from the agency, but from the Treasury and the Welsh Office.

Mr. Hunt: I put up with a lot from the hon. Gentleman, but the accusation that I am misleading the House is totally unacceptable. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I would not expect the hon. Gentleman to apologise——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I should tell the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) that Mr. Speaker has often reminded the House that to accuse an hon. Member or a Minister of misleading the House is unparliamentary and should not happen. Perhaps he will withdraw the remark or qualify it.

Mr. Morgan: I am terribly sorry if I have offended the Secretary of State by using an unparliamentary expression. I am sure that there was no intention on his part to mislead the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] Mr. Deputy Speaker, you did not ask me to withdraw but to rephrase what I said, in such a way that it does not offend parliamentary canons.

The problem remains the same. The Secretary of State is saying that the Welsh Development Agency has given him a set of facts, when I know it to be the other way round —that he has told the WDA to raise a set amount of money from these sales.

Mr. Hunt: I do not know what to say to that. I think I will ignore the whole thing. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members will get a chance to refer to that issue later, when I can intervene, but I am anxious to deal with some key points without taking up too much time, because many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Welsh Development International—the WDA's inward investment arm, of which we can be justifiably proud—has, among its recent successes, helped Wales to secure huge investments by companies such as Toyota, Bosch, British Airways, Sony and Dow Corning. Those five projects alone promise investment of nearly £680 million in the Principality.

There are now well over 300 overseas manufacturing companies in Wales, including 150 from Europe, 140 from

[Mr. Hunt]

North America and over 40 from Japan. Last year, 142 projects were secured, and they are expected to generate £639 million worth of capital expenditure and create or safeguard nearly 16,000 jobs.

I reckon that to be a pretty marvellous achievement. Although some people say that I take the credit, on every possible occasion I make it clear where the credit belongs, and it belongs primarily to the work force of Wales. I am just one who uses the opportunity given to me, by the quality of the work force, to sell that asset of Wales, and I shall continue to do so. Indeed, without the Welsh work force, we would not have achieved those figures. We would not have those figures without the Welsh Development Agency, either. My predecessor set an excellent example in winning investment, and I hope that I am living up to his reputation. Indeed, I am proud to have some facts to announce.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hunt: I am coming to my peroration, but I shall give way.

Dr. Howells: I welcome those enormous achievements, and the WDA as well as the Welsh people can be proud of them. However, may I ask a simple question: how much did it cost to secure those projects?

Mr. Hunt: I shall let the hon. Gentleman have a detailed breakdown of the estimated cost of each project. I shall also place a copy in the Library. There are a number of component parts. For instance, we had tremendous co-operation in securing the investment with British Airways from the local authorities and from further and higher education colleges. That is extremely important. I shall try to assess the cost, but I believe that the projects have been extremely worth while, and a very good investment.

As I said, 142 projects were secured last year, which was an all-time record. The evidence of those achievements is to be seen throughout Wales, in the form of modern manufacturing and business premises. Every effort will continue to be made to attract internationally mobile projects and increase the quality of inward investment throughout Wales.

Against that all-time record of 142 projects, I was told just a few hours ago that already this year 165 projects have been secured, promising capital expenditure of £830 million and more than 15,500 new or safeguarded jobs. I pay tribute to all those concerned in helping us to secure that investment. That includes hon. Members on both sides of the House as well as the Welsh work force, the WDA, local authorities and all the other crucial members of our partnership, in particular—following recent announcements—the Development Board for Rural Wales.

I am also acutely aware that there is enormous development potential among Wales' indigenous companies. The agency's business services have a key role in supporting those companies and helping them to grow, where such support is not available from the private sector.

One of the most vital areas is in doing business in Europe. Wales is still essentially a small-firms economy: over 90 per cent. of all manufacturing plants in Wales employ fewer than 100 people. That is both a strength and a vulnerability—a strength because it represents potential for growth, and a vulnerability because small firms often lack the management and financial resources necessary to do business overseas, or on a European basis, yet increasingly that is exactly what is required—to meet the competition and take advantage of the opportunities of the single market.

I have therefore given a high priority to developing business links with other European regions, particularly the "four motors"—the regions of Baden-Wurttemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy and Rhone-Alpes. The WDA has an important role to play in developing those links, particularly in helping to foster joint ventures and other business co-operation between smaller firms in Wales and Europe.

Last year, the agency also hosted the "Europartenariat", which is Europe's forum for small businesses. It attracted 1,300 people from 600 different companies from 17 European countries.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I thank the Secretary of State and his inspector for the public inquiry that was held in my constituency near the empty site of the former Felindre tin plate works, which the WDA and British Steel have been trying to sell for some time. The decision prevents West Glamorgan county council from establishing a gipsy site adjacent to one of the most marketable sites in Britain. Even though I am sure that it is vital that those people are housed properly and appropriate sites are found for them, I am sure that the decision is correct and will enable the WDA and British Steel to market the site adjacent to the M4. Hopefully, the Welsh Office will be able to assist a new inward investor to use that site, which has been empty for so long——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Hunt: I do not wish to come between the hon. Gentleman and his Labour-controlled county council, but I thank him for his remarks. As he said, appropriate sites will have to be found.

We are determined to disseminate information as widely as possible. European information centres have now been opened in Mold and Cardiff to provide information on European Community legislation and policies, and on the legal requirements for tendering, grants, funding, training needs and so on. More than 100 companies a month use the service. It is most important for the future of Wales that we maintain that approach to Europe. As part of that, the WDA will open an office in Brussels in the near future.

On the agency's responsibilities for environmental matters, the Government have provided the WDA with the resources to commit some £220 million—at today's prices—to reclaiming derelict land in Wales. More than 9,500 acres of previously derelict land have been brought back into productive use in one of the largest and most sustained programmes of its kind in Europe.

As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) will know, I was delighted to approve a scheme last year for work to begin on what I believe is western Europe's largest land reclamation scheme—the clearance of 900 acres of land at east Merthyr, which will provide new land for new industry, housing, and local

amenities. In the 1990s, business success will depend on the ability to recruit and retain skilled employees. Those employees will be attracted to an area with a first-class environment for business, leisure and family life. That is our objective for Wales.

The WDA can be proud of the role that it has played to date in the remarkable transformation of the Welsh economy and industrial landscape. I pay tribute to the staff of the agency, past and present, for all their efforts, to the work of past and present chairmen and chief executives of the agency, and to my own predecessors as Secretary of State. However, many challenges still face us and it would be wrong to suppose that the task is complete, or that we can yet relax our efforts. We must therefore look to the future.

To meet the challenges, I am delighted to have the support, knowledge and expertise of the present board of the WDA and of its chairman. The chairman and the present team are continuing the record of outstanding achievement. To add a new dimension and considerable experience of the world of international business and commerce, I am delighted to take this opportunity to announce today a new appointment to the board, Dr. Pamela Kirby. Dr. Kirby will be the first woman board member of the Welsh Development Agency—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]. She has strong family connections with west Wales and is the managing director of one of the fastest growing pharmaceutical companies in the United Kingdom, Astra Pharmaceuticals. Her experience and knowledge of the world of international business and commerce will enable her to make an important contribution to the work of the WDA. I greatly welcome the way in which that appointment has been received by the House.

For the immediate future, hon. Members will be aware that I will next year be providing more money for the WDA. The agency's gross budget is to be increased by £13·5 million to more than £166 million, the highest ever in cash and real terms. The funding will allow the WDA to build on its success in attracting inward investment to Wales. The agency will now be able to continue with a major programme of factory building in those areas of Wales where private sector provision is presently inadequate. Increasingly, the agency will concentrate on the preparation of sites and infrastructure, and on encouraging private sector investment in Wales, particularly through joint ventures.

Under the "Welsh property venture", more than half a million square feet of business accommodation has been secured in the first year of operation. For every £1 that the agency invested, more than £4 of private sector investment was secured for Wales.

As the agency increases its focus on the revitalisation of rural and urban communities, I also intend that it should make an even greater contribution to environmental improvement and urban renewal. In urban districts, under the programme "urban development in Wales", the WDA is working closely with local authorities and the private sector. Such schemes are under way in Llanelli, Ebbw Vale, Holyhead, the Cynon valley, Rhyl and Milford Haven. Those schemes are helping to create the right environment for living and working.

The WDA will also continue to concentrate on its rural districts, which have particular problems. The agency's rural property programme is designed to improve the viability and vitality of rural areas and has already highlighted 15 key rural towns and communities for action.

Like every non-departmental public organisation, the WDA is subject to a financial management and policy review at least every five years, in accordance with Government guidelines. That is a thorough, root-and-branch review to test the need for its continuing role and the effectiveness of its operations. That review is currently in hand for the WDA, and I look forward to the study with great interest. It will inform and shape future programmes.

I greatly welcome the way in which a more positive partnership is evolving as those programmes develop. That relationship is often led by the WDA, and includes local authorities. I shall do everything I can to encourage that partnership approach, because I believe that it gives Wales a significant edge.

We must build on those successes. The agency can and will play a role as an instrument of the Government's industrial and economic policy in Wales, and do so with distinction. I urge the House to support the Bill so that the agency can continue its fine work and achieve the objectives that the Government have set.

5.24 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State largely overlooked the recent job losses due to, for example, the closure of the Brymbo steelworks in Clwyd. There were also job losses at Austin Taylor in Gwynedd, Inmos in Gwent and AB Electronics in mid Glamorgan and the closure of Penallta colliery. It will put the debate in context if I say that unemployment in mid Glamorgan puts the county in the top 10 of the worst places in Great Britain, with nearly 25,000 people on the dole. There are more than 13,500 unemployed people in Clwyd county and more than 10,000 in the county of Gwynedd. In south Glamorgan, nearly 19,000 people are out of work.

Why has the Secretary of State no strategy and no plans to safeguard what remains of Wales's manufacturing base? Why has he been so laggardly in responding to the loss of apprenticeships? Why has he neglected the transport infrastructure? Why has he overlooked the decline of the construction industry? Where are the jobs to take the place of the thousands of coal jobs that have been lost? Where are the well-paid permanent jobs for those who have been displaced from the steel industry?

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I apologise to my hon. Friend for butting in on him, but the position is even worse. He mentioned Brymbo. When jobs were lost there, Brymbo was making a profit, and had done so for the last 20 years of its existence until it was closed last year. Since then, the Welsh Office has not been able to do anything about it. The land is lying idle, the people who lost their jobs have not been able to obtain new ones, and it is a sorry mess. I hope that the increase in the borrowing limit will enable the WDA to do something for my constituents.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has fought hard on the Brymbo issue, and was right to say that it is a sorry mess. It was a shabby episode; the locality was treated badly and its residents have yet to receive justice. I will support my hon. Friend in his efforts on behalf of the people of Brymbo.

I thought that the Secretary of State was a shade complacent. On 26 June 1975, on the Second Reading of

[Mr. Jones]

the original legislation, the Welsh Development Agency Bill, the hon. Members for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) voted against it, as did the Minister of State at the Welsh Office and Nicholas Edwards. The record shows that the Minister of State was in a fierce mood that day. He thundered: "This is socialism". The evidence shows that, even then, the bardic steamroller was inching forward through debates.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): With regard to what I said in 1975 about the original legislation to establish the Welsh Development Agency, is the hon. Gentleman not aware that the first action that the Government took when they came into office was to change the role of the WDA, which is now a very different agency from the one that it was? That accounts for its current great success.

Mr. Jones: I read every word of the right hon. Gentleman's speech and it was rabid. If he were to re-read it, he would blush to his roots.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his typical courtesy. While he is on the subject of consistency, will he say where he stood on the issue of Britain's membership of the European Community during those years?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is greatly respected and has contributed greatly to our debates over many years, and I shall be sorry to see him standing down at the general election. However, I think that his intervention might be just a little wide of the wide subject under discussion. It is his King Charles's head, and he shall have it; nobody can take it away from him.

I was about to say before I was so charmingly intervened upon—as only an old Etonian can—that today's debate can take place only because the last Labour Government created the Welsh Development Agency. It should be put on record that the Administration of Mr. Harold Wilson enacted the legislation that created the agency. It was far-sighted, practical, caring legislation. Mr. Wilson's objective, and that of his then Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), was to give Wales a fresh start.

As Premier in a previous Administration, Mr. Wilson created the Department of State which is the Welsh Office. Mr. Wilson appointed the first Secretary of State for Wales, the great Mr. Jim Griffiths, the former Member for Llanelli. Mr. Wilson's Labour Government for the first time endowed the Welsh Office with the real economic and industrial power that it needed. That power was to be used for the people of Wales, and to make good its scarred and poisoned landscapes.

I shall mention the novels that relate to Wales: *The Rape of the Fair Country*, *How Green Was My Valley* and the play, "The Corn is Green". Those titles are famous, evocative and emotional. They may be inspiring as fictional chronicles of our unfolding social and economic history, but those who, in yesteryear, amassed fortunes from coal, iron, steel and slate rarely ploughed back the profits that sweat and blood had created. That is why we needed a Welsh Development Agency, and I stress that it was a Labour Government who gave it to Wales.

The Bill restores the financial limit to the real value that it achieved after the last increase in 1988. When we had the previous debate on the Bill in January 1988, the economic situation was different. Unemployment was falling, the WDA factory vacancies were low and business optimism was high. But today the Welsh economy is in the depths of the second Conservative recession in 12 years. Unemployment is more than 40 per cent. higher than it was 12 months ago, output is down by 5·4 per cent. and bankruptcies are up 88 per cent. on last year with 1,317 bankruptcies and insolvencies in Wales in the first nine months of this year alone. That is a serious situation. The number of vacant agency factory units is up. Today in south and north Wales business men who have given a lifetime's service to job creation are now being ruined. Their businesses are going to the wall; they are being destroyed by the Government's policies.

I think that the Secretary of State will agree that the WDA has proved an outstanding success. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it has provided a platform for economic regeneration in Wales in partnership with our local authorities. I will celebrate with the right hon. Gentleman the location of Sharp and Toyota in my constituency, Bosch in south Glamorgan and the considerable extension of Sony in Bridgend, which I visited with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). We went there first a matter of days before the Prime Minister and were given a fine reception in a fine industrial location.

New challenges are opening up for Wales. The single market after 1992 will make product market competition stiffer, particularly for peripheral regions of Europe such as Wales where many firms are ill equipped to meet the challenge ahead. The new product markets are increasingly competitive and—I emphasise—quality conscious. There is growing competition for inward investment from other parts of the United Kingdom, and particularly from eastern Europe. There is also a vital need for direction from the Welsh Office and a new partnership approach between Government and industry.

The Secretary of State mentioned inward investment. In the inward investment battles of the 1990s, Wales will not be able to compete with eastern Europe on labour costs. With or without the efforts of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), eastern Europe will provide a range of inward investment opportunities that may be lost to Wales. Nor should we wish to compete in the new Europe on the basis of paying poverty wages to attract low skill and low technology employment. That is not the route to a stable and dynamic Welsh economy. Manufacturing processes and the competitive markets of Europe require total quality, flexibility and innovation. Such skills do not come from poverty pay; they require the efficient use of labour and, above all, quality training.

As British Airways proved, adequate skilled labour and training is a chief concern of the new generation of inward investors. On that we can agree. It is imperative that Welsh Development International communicates the skill requirements of likely inward investors to our training and enterprise councils and our colleges. That is clearly done by British Airways, but it must be common practice in the 1990s.

I am concerned that the proposals in the Further and Higher Education Bill may well reduce the ability to co-ordinate such responses to the needs of inward investors. I have had consultations with some local

education authorities and some leading councillors in south Wales and that is what they tell me. The Welsh Office and the agency must take that on board.

The effect of the recession on our manufacturing industry has been pointed out in a recent report by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). I understand from him that the Hoover apprenticeship scheme trained some 24 apprentices a year in its heyday. This year, for the first time in 48 years, Hoover will not recruit one apprentice. In Clwyd in my constituency, British Aerospace at Broughton has virtually halted its apprentice scheme this autumn. This year it has taken on only 12 clerical apprentices; it usually takes on 70 or more trainee tradesmen, but that is not the case this autumn. British Aerospace in Clwyd, with more than 4,500 employees, is, arguably, the largest reservoir of skills in northern Britain, certainly in Wales, but we have there the virtual rundown of a necessary resource for Wales, which must make its way in the next century and prepare now for the competition to come.

The National Audit Office report raises a number of crucial questions not only about the agency but about the Welsh Office and regional selective assistance. Successive Conservative Welsh Office Ministers have placed great emphasis on estimates of future jobs for political as well as other reasons. Wales has done extraordinarily well in creating new jobs. But now we need to discover why there has been such a shortfall in jobs created compared with the projections. I hope that when the Minister replies he will attempt to answer that question. It must be addressed. What does the Secretary of State intend to do with regard to the National Audit Office's key recommendation that the WDA's monitoring techniques should be improved so that its programmes can be properly evaluated?

Reference has been made to innovation and technology. That is the seed corn for the high added value and high skill employment that Wales must foster in the 1990s. The WDA needs more support from the Welsh Office to increase the Welsh take-up of the United Kingdom and the Common Market funds for research, development, innovation and technology transfer. It is fair to say that so far Wales has fared poorly in attracting such funds. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has made some observations on that matter.

We must also expand ventures such as the Imperial science park. That joint venture between Imperial college, London, the agency and Newport borough council must be applauded. It is a first-rate development which is good for Wales. It will become one of the leading research and development parks in the United Kingdom.

I have set out the Labour party's agenda for the agency and I have referred to the Welsh economy, but before I conclude I pose the question: what would a fourth Conservative term mean for Wales? [HON. MEMBERS: "Another recession."] My right hon. and hon. Friends are right. It would mean a third recession for the Welsh economy. The Conservatives have failed to address the key supply side issues, failed to deliver internationally competitive standards of education and training, and starved business of investment through high interest rates.

Another Conservative Administration would mean creeping privatisation for the Welsh Development Agency. If the Conservatives were to win again—I do not think that they will—the WDA could be broken up, on the lines of Scottish Enterprise. Alternatively, the agency's property revenue function, which represents a major source of its revenue, might be hived off. The House may remember that when a similar proposal was made by the agency's west Wales office, it led to the resignation of senior officials at that office.

The Conservatives' record is a bad record. When the general election takes place, Labour will be victorious. A Labour Government will create a successful, productive, and modern economy. Only a Labour victory will endow Wales with an economy capable of meeting the fierce competition of the next century.

5.40 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) rightly chastised the Government for their economic record. It is sad that, after 10 years of Conservative rule, Wales is the poorest economic region in Britain. That was not the case in 1979. Whatever Conservative Administrations have tried, they have been unable to improve relatively the wealth of the Welsh economy.

We welcome the Bill, because it is quite an achievement for the Welsh Development Agency to have survived the free market mania that held sway between 1979 and 1991 and the ideological zeal of the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), who vehemently opposed the WDA originally. That is a tribute also to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who helped to build that durable institution, as well as the Land Authority for Wales. Both survived the Thatcherite blitz of the 1980s.

The Secretary of State said that the aim was to achieve a self-sustaining private sector. I hope not, because I cannot identify any in the modern industrial world. France does not have a self-sustaining private sector economy, and nor does Germany or Japan. The agency's purpose is to fill the gaps that the private sector cannot fill. That is why we need interventionism, and why it is good that the WDA has survived.

The agency will have to take a different tack in the 1990s in addressing itself and the Welsh Office to the problems that Wales and the Welsh economy will face in the 1990s—which will be different from those of the 1980s.

Two factors have affected, and will continue to affect, the Welsh economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside alluded to the collapse of the Soviet empire. We must acknowledge that the centre of gravity in Europe is moving further east. We have always been to the west of the centre of power—certainly so far as Brussels is concerned—but that will move further east. It is all very well for members of Plaid Cymru especially to salivate every time Baden-Wurttemberg is mentioned, but it could become a big element. Investment from that source may well go to east Germany, Czechoslovakia, and parts of the former Soviet bloc.

It is fashionable to condemn the old command economies of eastern Europe—but when the dust has settled, it may be realised that considerable basic engineering skills are available in east Germany and Czechoslovakia. I would like comparisions made of the number of qualified engineers in Czechoslovakia and Wales. I hope that Wales will come out of them quite well, but I have doubts.

Those skills can be found also in other parts of eastern Europe. We must not get carried away with the idea that the Soviet economy was unable to produce people trained

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in production. They will be employed in future, and some investment will go to those eastern states unless we are careful. The right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) has already spotted that; having already made a foray into Baden-Wurttemberg, he is now to work for Baden-Wurttemberg in trying to move investment away from this island to eastern Europe.

This is not the occasion to debate the move towards European union, but if that is to occur, there is a great danger that Wales will become the South Dakota of the new union. If the United Kingdom is locked into currencies that it cannot change, and unable to control interest rates and to operate budget deficits, and if it cannot subsidise its industry, this country and others on the periphery—we will be more so in future—will suffer from the concentration in the centre.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, if Britain does not sign up to European monetary union and is outside the inner currency circle, there will be pressure on many of the overseas companies that have located in Wales to relocate elsewhere in Europe—and that Wales would then lose many of the benefits achieved by the WDA over the past 10 years?

Mr. Davies: I did not intend to provoke the hon. Gentleman, but without massive transfers of resources from the centre to areas such as Wales, we will suffer from the move towards European union. I see no sign of them by way of an enhanced regional policy in Brussels. If there are such transfers, my fear is that they will go to southern European countries, which can make a case for them in terms of income per head, unemployment, and their domestic economies. Portugal, Spain, southern Italy and Greece could get money—but where would that leave Britain?

I doubt that the Germans would be prepared to use their public money to provide such transfers, which we must have if Wales is not to become the South Dakota or Oklahoma of the united states of Europe, the federal union, or whatever it is to be called.

We are all agreed that the WDA's inward investment arm has worked well, and that operation must be continued and nurtured. I am concerned, however—this is not meant as a criticism of the people who run the agency —that the agency is leaning too far towards property interests. It is natural for the WDA to have an involvement in property, because to some extent it grew out of the land reclamation units of the Welsh Office. It is natural also that the WDA should be concerned, as it is, with clearing derelict land and constructing new buildings on it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) gave the public expenditure figures. The Government's hope is that, by selling off property and generating property income, they can be relieved of putting grant-in-aid money into the WDA. However, the 1980s are over, and the 1990s will not be about property debt, and using property development to increase land values. Ski slopes, marinas, and golf clubs are all very nice—but they will not attract the kind of investment needed in the 1990s.

To do that, Wales must create new skills. Whatever may be the value of the pound or ecu, if Wales cannot offer the necessary engineering skills, it will not attract inward investment. Wales is falling down on skills. It does not have the engineering, technological and scientific skills that it should to attract investment. Ministers know that very well.

Our education system is no longer geared to produce the engineering, technological and scientific elite that we need. It is geared to produce the semi-skilled and, indeed, unskilled work force who are required in many large sectors of the economy, especially the service sector. Most jobs in the service sector are unskilled, and a specialised education system is not needed to produce them.

We cannot produce the elite engineering skills possessed by Japan, Germany and, to an extent, France. To produce such skills, we need a system that is still concerned with diligence, discipline and attention to detail. The Japanese have done so well not because of management skills but because their engineers are so good. Engineering demands diligence, scientific skills and attention to detail.

I pay tribute to the West Wales training and enterprise council, which appreciates the need to create manufacturing skills. It is, however, having to do its work against a background of 10 years in which nothing was done, and despite the collapse of much of our industry. If an area contains only service industries, where can people be trained to become engineers and technologists? They can only hope to be employed by McDonalds, B and Q or Great Mills. The TECs do what they can, but they have not the hinterland or the infrastructure that would enable them to carry out their job properly.

Perhaps the WDA should now consider itself the arm of the Welsh economy that tries to produce and use money to create an elite in science, technology and engineering, and thus benefit the Welsh economy. I do not know whether that can be done, however. At one time, the California and Massachusetts institutes of technology were the great institutions or the world, but, for all I know, the great institutions of production and engineering may now be in Japan. Why cannot the WDA involve itself more with schools in Wales? Why cannot it find the youngsters of both sexes who have an aptitude for engineering and science, and use Government money to encourage them —perhaps even send them to Japan to be trained? We cannot train them here.

We need an interventionist agency. We may criticise the French ecoles for being elitist and superior, but they have been remarkably successful in creating a technical and scientific work force, quite apart from administrators and civil servants. It will take time, but perhaps the WDA will be able to create the skills without which we cannot develop the Welsh economy, regardless of our political views.

Those are the challenges for the 1990s, rather than building or property ventures or even the clearing of land. If we have no skilled work force, the investment will not come, whatever currency union we may belong to.

5.53 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, this debate follows a month in which the unemployment figures fell in Wales. That is no small achievement, and it deserves to be

noted: both the headline rate and the seasonally adjusted figures fell. I wish that I could say that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) had acknowledged the fall, but, as always, he tried to paint a completely different picture. The hon. Gentleman is a perpetual merchant of doom and gloom: if he had the chance he would always talk down the Welsh economy, rather than acknowledging positive developments.

In the 1983 Parliament, the hon. Gentleman could be relied on to table the same question about unemployment for every Welsh Question Time. That tailed off remarkably in the three years of the current Parliament, in which unemployment fell month after month. The hon. Gentleman became rudderless then, and he may be in danger of becoming so again; we all hope, in our heart of hearts, that unemployment will fall and he will have nothing left to ask questions about.

Dr. Kim Howells: I know that the hon. Gentleman is not habitually flippant about such matters; I know that he cares about them. Will he acknowledge, however, that Wales contains some employment black spots? They can be found in the north-west, the middle and, indeed, the south. It is a travesty to treat the subject with anything other than the seriousness that it deserves.

Mr. Jones: I hasten to reassure the hon. Gentleman that I have no wish to treat the subject with flippancy. I know that in the parts of south Wales that he and I represent, and in other parts of Wales, it is not always easy to attract potential investors. I suggest, however, that the Government and the WDA would be even more successful in helping Wales if Opposition Members concentrated on the positive aspects of what is being done, rather than adopting the attitude of doom and gloom that they so often display.

I welcome the opportunity to review the WDA's work. It has already been pointed out that, when the agency was set up in 1975, its establishment was opposed by my party. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside's party was then in government. The WDA was a rather different animal then—a very imprecise and wishy-washy animal. It was responsible for industrial development, advisory services to enterprise, small business development, promotion and publicity, the provision of industrial sites and premises, industrial infrastructure and environmental improvement. That is quite a wishy-washy list.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister reminded us, virtually the first action that was taken after the 1979 election was the reshaping of the agency into a meaningful body—one that has been successful in Wales. It now has much more precise and targeted objectives: the provision, letting and management of sites and premises for industry, land reclamation and the promotion of Wales as a location for industrial development

Is it not amazing that the promotion of Wales as a location for industrial development was originaly tucked away alongside publicity? It was originaly a very underrated feature. That alone may justify my party's opposition in 1975, and our subsequent reshaping of the agency.

Do not Opposition Members remember the fiasco of the advance factories? The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)—and probably the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside—would scuttle around Wales, opening one advance factory after another. It became a joke among the people of Wales: yet another empty shed would have its ribbon cut by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. That was the standard of the WDA before my right hon. Friend reshaped it into the successful animal that it is now.

The present Government have made the agency much more specific and appropriate. It should never be forgotten that only the present Government have provided it with sufficient funding. As my right hon. Friend was able to announce, its budget has been doubled in real terms, to £160 million. The WDA is now a success of which we can all be proud, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have acknowledged. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) stressed its success in attracting inward investment. Since the inward investment arm was formed in 1983, approximately 85,000 jobs have been created or secured. We should all praise the agency highly for that.

I recall attending in the summer recess the most pleasing opening of the Robert Bosch factory outside Cardiff. I should give credit to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State because he has devoted much energy to developing links with the motor areas of Baden-Württemberg, where Robert Bosch came from, and with Catalonia. He has signed a remarkable treaty in Catalan and Welsh, and we look forward to further developments between Wales and Catalonia.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that this year the WDA has achieved another record in attracting 165 projects worth £830 million and 15,000 jobs. Again, that is a most creditable figure. I emphasise what my right hon. Friend said—that attracting inward investment is a team job involving Ministers, the Welsh Development Agency, county and district councils and, in my part of south Wales, Cardiff and Vale enterprise. In addition—sometimes it does not get thanked enough—Cardiff chamber of commerce and industry plays a major part in supporting missions abroad and looking after potential investors who come to Wales.

Inward investment has been a real success in Wales. The policy of the Trades Union Congress to Japanese investment is particularly regrettable. It described it as an alien culture.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The hon. Gentleman paid tribute of the work of the Cardiff chamber of commerce and industry, which received considerable grant moneys from local authorities for the work that it undertook with other bodies. Will he be a little more even-handed rather than appearing to be churlish in criticising organisations and ignoring the contribution of local authorities?

Mr. Jones: That shows that the hon. Gentleman was not listening. If he had paid closer attention, he would have heard me refer to the team that usually comprised the Welsh Office, the WDA and local councils. I also mentioned the significant contribution of the Cardiff chamber of commerce and industry. I do not depart from what I said.

I was dealing with the worrying stance of the TUC in condemning Japanese investment as an alien culture. Especially worrying—I did not notice any comment from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, but perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will deal with this—is Labour Members failing to condemn the TUC's attitude to Japanese inward

[Mr. Jones]

investment. Wales has been most successful in attracting Japanese investment and is therefore most vulnerable to a Labour-TUC campaign against such investment. That would only encourage existing investment to relocate elsewhere and potential investment to say that Japanese investment is not welcome in Wales.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I have no authority to speak on behalf of Wales TUC, but from my knowledge of its activities I can say that that is not its policy. It has worked hard to ensure suitable trades union agreements to facilitate Japanese investment in Wales.

Mr. Jones: I look forward to the Wales TUC distancing itself from the TUC, otherwise it will feel that it is being betrayed by the TUC's hostile approach. Japanese companies in Wales and those who care about the Welsh economy must be curious about why Opposition Members have not condemned the TUC's policy.

Mr. Michael: We should all agree on the need to encourage inward investment and indigenous industry and adopt a bipartisan approach. Labour Members agree with the hon. Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) that Wales TUC has adopted such an approach. There has been a partnership between the different agencies of national and local government. In view of the importance of the debate and of the WDA, I invite the hon. Gentleman to be less churlish and not turn it into a party-political ping-pong match. It is too important for that.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman always dodges the issue. Perhaps I should give way again so that he can condemn the TUC's policy of hostility to Japanese companies and for describing them as an alien culture. We know that that is the TUC's position. Common sense tells us that the only likely result is that Japanese investment will be frightened away and not made welcome. Shall I give way to the hon. Gentleman so that he can condemn the TUC?

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman might as well give way so that we can get a little common sense into the debate. We are discussing the WDA. If he knows anything about the work to secure inward investment in Wales, including Japanese investment, he should know of the close partnership, to which tribute has been paid by successive Secretaries of State, between Wales TUC and unions. It is a diversion for the hon. Gentleman to go down this course. Although it is not for me to call him to order, I suggest that he returns to the subject of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Jones: I suppose that I should apologise. I have been wasting the time of the House by allowing the hon. Gentleman to intervene. He continues to evade the point. He will not condemn the TUC. He is saying, as a Labour Front-Bench spokesman, that he does not care about Japanese inward investment. By not condemning the hostility to Japanese investment, on behalf of his party he is saying that he does not want Wales to have the opportunity of exporting to Japan. Instead, he would prefer investment to be made elsewhere and for Japan to export to Wales.

Wales can develop far more profitable opportunities from its successful partnership with Japan. About three years ago, a parliamentary mission to Japan met the head of Yuasa Batteries. His opening remarks were, "How can we apply the Thatcher miracle here in Japan?" The Japanese recognise that they can gain from us in the same way as we can gain from them. But we shall not gain from the hostility of the TUC or from Labour's failure to condemn that attitude.

Another inappropriate development has been the unfortunate way in which the chairman of the WDA has been drawn into political debate. Early-day motions have been tabled by an hon. Gentleman who is not in his place to explain what he means which make some unwarranted or not obviously justified allegations against the chairman. The most substantiated charge against him is that, in the middle of a busy business trip to the other side of the world, he might have had a 24-hour stop-over en route from Australia to the west coast of America. That is a most ridiculous charge. It is like criticising the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) for stopping for a cup of coffee at Membury or Leedelamere services as he drives home to Cardiff on the M4 tonight. That the chairman should have a break and stop at a normal refuelling point for 24 hours—all air services from Australia stop at one or two locations—scarcely appears to warrant a wholly unjustified early-day motion. Again, I wait to see what Opposition Front-Bench Members say about that slur. Anyone who has been on parliamentary missions abroad will know that they are not junkets. Their itineraries—or those of the missions on which I have been—have been exhaustive. There was very little free time left to any of the participants. The people who work so hard for Wales inevitably need a break at the weekend to recharge their batteries so that the hard work done until Saturday morning can be restarted on Monday morning.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) is not here. I regard the early-day motion as the cheapest of cheap shots. I imagine that he does not have great support from his colleagues. In considering the signatories of the two early-day motions, one finds that of the first six only one signature on each motion is that of a Welsh Member of Parliament. The hon. Gentleman has had to rely for support on English Members of Parliament, and we can see those who signed this wholly unwarranted and unjustified slur against the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and against the agency itself. I wish that the hon. Gentleman were here to hear what I say. He is doing nothing other than contributing to the "selling Wales short" campaign.

I have met the chairman of the WDA a few times and I know of no justification for such an attack. He appears to have very much the right approach, which is to go out and get business for Wales. Who can be surprised that changes are being made to such an agency? It is a body which must constantly move on, change and become more efficient and more expert. It is natural that a new chairman of the WDA would change the style of the agency's operations. From what I can see, he seems to be making the right changes and the WDA is making progress.

I hope that the useless and ridiculous early-day motions, which should never have appeared on the Order Paper, can be put behind us and that we can pretend that they do not exist. In general, the WDA and all those who work for it are doing a good job, and we want to see them do even better.

6.11 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I welcome the Bill to increase the investment limit of the Welsh Development Agency from £700 million to £950 million. The WDA's record is very good and I do not think that any hon. Member will dispute that.

I do not wish to be churlish, but I am a little concerned about the comparison between the ability of the WDA to spend £950 million and the £16 million approximately that is allocated to the Development Board for Rural Wales. Since the WDA also has a remit to operate in rural areas, it is clear that some of the money allocated to it will find its way into the rural areas of north, south and west Wales. However, there has been a lack of recognition so far in the debate of the crisis in the countryside, in farming and in the rural areas. I am greatly concerned that many sons —even single sons—of farming families are now leaving the industry. That has happened to the chairman of the Brecon and Radnor National Farmers Union, who was a member of the same young farmers club as I was. His son is unable to continue on the family farm, which is sad.

I think that we all accept that there must be an interventionist role in the WDA and the DBRW for channelling public funds into a mixed economy, so more attention should be paid to the very low incomes now to be found in farming. They are now at their lowest since the second world war.

One problem confronting agriculture and agricultural products is the power of the supermarket chains in the marketplace. They now control more than 50 per cent. of food retail marketing. Indeed, one would have thought that it should not be necessary for them to ask to open on Sundays in order to ply their trade. I should have thought that they were doing very nicely anyway. However, that leaves the agricultural industry, and farmers in particular, in a very weak bargaining position. I should have thought that the WDA and the DBRW could in future pay more attention to aspects of co-operative marketing. Earlier this week I visited the Royal Welsh showground and I was pleased to hear the chairman of the DBRW, Mr. Glyn Davies, announce investment in a new food hall on the Royal Welsh agricultural show site. That is an excellent initiative and should be the forerunner of more initiatives to market more Welsh food products.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the financial backing that the Development Board for Rural Wales is giving to food promotion which will be our main arm in selling Welsh food products at home and abroad.

Mr. Livsey: I am certainly aware of that fact and I welcome such initiatives which, I think, are long overdue. I am glad to see that some are in the pipeline. I am concerned about the present inability of farmers to co-operate effectively in marketing their food products. I hope that such initiatives will assist that process.

I am especially concerned about the lack of EC abattoirs in rural Wales, whether in the WDA's area or in that of the DBRW. I think that I am right in saying that there is now a fourth abattoir in Llanidloes which—I acknowledge—has received support from the DBRW. However, let us compare our position in rural Wales with that of other parts of the United Kingdom. Scotland has 20 European Community-approved abattoirs and Northern Ireland has 28, so we are a long way behind. I should like the DBRW and the WDA to encourage co-operative marketing groups among farmers and to enable them to set up abattoirs and meat packing plants so that they can compete in the fierce retail food market in Britain and, I hope, to export to mainland Europe where they also need to compete.

Unless we have our house in order and can market products that housewives want and which are in an easily accessible form for modern living, we shall lose out. It appears that unless things change rapidly, we shall be able to slaughter only about 40 per cent. of our lamb crop in Wales. We still have little ability to produce marketable products from meat packing, and so on.

I make no apology for drawing the Minister's attention to an issue that concerns my constituency. I noted the WDA's great success in land reclamation in south and north Wales. It has done an excellent job. However, as the Minister will know, I am very concerned about a continuing burning tyre fire on a derelict site. The fire has serious environmental consequences at Heyope near Knighton, where 10 million tyres have been on fire for the past two years as a result of arson. Water is becoming steadily more polluted in the river Teme. Four million water consumers downstream in the west midlands might be threatened. To be fair, many agencies have tried to tackle the problem, including the Powys fire service, which has gone as far afield as Canada to draw attention to the problem. As many millions of pounds are available to the WDA to reclaim old sites in south and north Wales, will the Minister please consider the possibility of using derelict land reclamation funds from the WDA to tackle that site, which is not large? We are talking about hundreds of thousands of pounds, not millions of pounds, to overcome the problem. There I leave that topic.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I know that that problem is causing concern and I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that there will be an early meeting of the chairman of the WDA, the local authority and company representatives to discuss it further.

Mr. Livsey: I am delighted to hear that and I thank the Minister most sincerely. There is great and mounting concern about the situation, which not only affects a small locality but has wider implications. I believe that the situation is unique in the world.

Another aspect of the WDA and, to some extent, the DBRW which concerns me—I am not nit-picking; I am merely mentioning the matter—is the desirability of having more in-house consultants and agencies in Wales to provide consultancy work for the two agencies. Far too often consultancy services have to come from outside Wales, yet in Wales we have people with professional training who could develop greater expertise in consultancy work, especially financial consultancy. I trust that in future this idea will come more to the fore.

Only yesterday, as the Minister will know, we had a wide-ranging discussion on infrastructure projects in Wales—especially roads. Wales still has poor infrastructure. We still need a north-south road and better links between mid-Wales and the midlands. That will require more public investment than can be provided by local authorities, or even by the Welsh Office. Some of the agencies may be able to assist us. Perhaps the WDA and the DBRW could make recommendations for improved

[Mr. Livsey]

infrastructure in Wales. That would assist with exports and communications and improve economic activity in general.

I am sure that the Welsh Office already consults on the matter, but perhaps it could consult the agencies more on economic infrastructure, such as roads and railways. Perhaps it could consider jointly with the Department of Transport the desirability of electrifying the railway lines into Wales.

Other hon. Members have rightly stressed the importance of skill training. It is vital. We know that Wales has an immensely dedicated resource in its work force. Hon. Members have also rightly praised the Welsh work force for its ability to get down to the job, tackle it and learn how to increase productivity. However, even given the advance of the training and enterprise councils, we need more integrated skill training and more integration with local education authorities, too. That matter needs more attention. Sandwich courses are important, as is training on the job and then returning to courses run by education authorities—higher education colleges, for example. I was in that environment before I entered the House.

Perhaps with the increased investment available under the Bill the WDA will be able to assist with the problem of unemployment. Wales is still an unemployment black spot, with more than 120,000 people out of work. That is far too many. The problem must be tackled.

The philosophy of the mixed economy is now widely accepted on both sides of the House, despite what the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) said, Thatcherism is dead. It may have been a factor in the 1980s, but it does not live in the 1990s. We are in a different era altogether. We all accept the mixed economy and the fact that the WDA and the DBRW can contribute to it.

We have been fortunate in some of the tenants of the Welsh Office, especially the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker)—I suspect that the tendencies of the present Secretary of State, too, are on the damp side. We have been fortunate that there has been the will to pursue the philosophy of running the mixed economy better. The fact that the Bill provides increased powers for giving financial support to the WDA shows that clearly, too.

The problem of the low-wage economy in Wales still needs to be tackled. We will not get better quality jobs until we have better skill training and more skilled people there. That cannot be emphasised too much—nor can the importance to the Welsh economy of home-based industry and small businesses that grow. More attention must be paid to them, especially in terms of providing better financial arrangements and management assistance. I know that the chief executive of the WDA is now considering that and will soon go round the small businesses of Wales, geeing them up and trying to improve the position. I welcome that initiative.

Increasing the amount of manufacturing industry, after its disastrous decline over the past 12 years, is vital for Wales. The WDA will have a crucial role there too.

The future of Wales lies within the European Community. I strongly endorse monetary union and greater policial integration in the EC. I believe that we will get more for the Welsh economy, a higher standard of living and a better future for our young people out of better integration within the European Community. Federalism is much misunderstood in some parts of the Conservative party. Subsidiarity—the policy coming out of the EC—fits Wales well. It is about making decisions at appropriate levels in the Community, so one would hope that in future more power will reside at a Welsh level. Parts of the WDA operation already show that. All that we need to do now is to bring greater democracy to Wales to ensure that political decision making, too, is brought nearer to the people.

At a European level, the creation of a single currency is inevitable and will bring great benefits to Wales. It is only just round the corner. We have a few little local difficulties, such as Maastricht, to overcome, but on the whole the British people, especially the Welsh, are behind those moves. We are going in the right direction, and my party welcomes the Bill.

6.27 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Welsh Development Agency has been, is and, I am sure, will remain the development lifeline of communities such as mine. We find it difficult now to believe in life without the WDA. But sadly, however much of a lifeline it has been and still is, I have to report that in the past decade it has been unable to cushion us against or insulate us from recession and economic mismanagement.

The Secretary of State said today, as he has repeatedly said in the past, that we face a period of restructuring the Welsh economy because of the loss of jobs in coal and steel over the past decade. I remind him, and the House, that in my community over the past 10 years three times as many jobs have been lost from the manufacturing sector as have been lost from coal and from the closure of the last of the Dowlais iron works. It is not the collapse of coal and of iron in the past decade, but the collapse of manufacturing industry that was brought into our communities to replace the coal and steel jobs which has created the jobs chasm. That has been our major problem in the 1980s.

It could be argued that the problems of the early 1980s led to a need to restructure and to develop new production techniques in the manufacturing sector. That view was taken as much by the trade union movement in Hoover in my constituency as by management and by the Government. However, we rightly feel resentment and bitterness about the second recession and about the second destruction of jobs that is happening now. That is not a consequence of restructuring and it has nothing to do with coal or steel. The self-inflicted recession and loss of jobs are a result of mismanagement by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and the Cabinet during the two years that led to a crazy commercial and property boom not in south Wales, but in other parts of the country. That had to be stopped by cripplingly high interest rates. In turn, that not only brought to a halt the property boom in the south-east, but brought about the sudden and disastrous decline of manufacturing investment in industrial and consumer goods. We have the right to say that the job losses suffered in the past 18 months have occurred as a result of mismanagement by the Government. The Welsh Development Agency has been unable to protect us from that.

The problem is best illustrated in my own community. Effort has been put in by all concerned, including the

Secretary of State, the Minister, the Welsh Development Agency, local authorities and myself. We have worked hard to attract new companies. It was announced recently that two new companies in my community, an exciting prospect, could bring in 170 jobs in the next couple of years. Last week, almost 100 jobs on one line were lost at Nancanco in Rhymney which almost wiped out the job opportunities provided by the new companies. What has happened is a result of economic mismanagement, not of demanding too high wage increases—Hoover workers have scarcely had a wage increase—or of bad industrial relations in the past two years. Workers' rights have been eroded week by week and month by month in our community. There is no citizens charter for people at work who are having to accept poor conditions and relationships. The jobs have gone as a result of economic mismanagement by the Government over the past two years.

Once again, we must try to bridge the jobs chasm which has emerged in communities such as Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. We turn to the Welsh Development Agency for support and assistance in bridging the jobs chasm. Two questions lie behind many of the speeches made by hon. Members. Where will the new jobs come from? How shall we attract them? If we can answer those two questions, we can identify the role of the Welsh Development Agency and of the money that we shall approve through the Bill.

Where will the jobs come from? Much has rightly been said about the need to attract inward investment and all communities in south Wales can demonstrate the success of inward investment. However, as my right hon. Friends the Members for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) have observed, the game is getting more competitive. Whether from central Europe or from other Community countries, there will be growing competition, and the competition to attract inward investment is already intense. We must not become over-dependent on a new wave of inward investment. In some ways, we do not need to be too dependent on new inward investment because within our own communities with the existing inward investors there are tremendous job creation possibilities.

I read with great fascination a recent publication by the Department of Trade and Industry, and I hope that the Minister, the Secretary of State and everyone in the Welsh Office has also read it. One had given up the Department of Trade and Industry, yet in June 1991 it published a document called "Market Opportunities for Electronic Component Manufacturers—A Study of Demand Created by Japanese Electronic Equipment Manufacturers in the UK". It shows that about £1 billion worth of components are feeding existing inward investment and that the figure will rise in the next four years to £1·7 billion. Hon. Members should think of the jobs potential if we can reach out and develop the contacts, and if we can create the manufacturing capacity to meet some of that demand. The Department of Trade and Industry document refers to local political pressures. I am delighted that somebody in that Department understands the issue, even if the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry does not. The document refers to the pressure that is being put on existing inward investors to diversify and to source in the local communities.

We have heard nothing so far about what strategy the Secretary of State and the Welsh Development Agency will adopt to gain a share of the magnificent Japanese investment in south Wales and to benefit from the components potential of inward investment. Will we gain a share of the local sourcing? That could be a major area of job creation within our community. Everyone dismisses the sheds. I do not, and I am very glad that there are sheds in my area because we shall need many more if we are to fill the jobs chasm. Companies, whether local, United Kingdom or owned by inward investors, will come to the sheds to feed components into the first generation of inward investment manufacturing. We must appreciate that potential and we should not spend all our time chasing new companies, although we must do that to an extent. We must spend as much time building on the potential that has been identified even in dry Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Surely he must be fully aware that with many of the new inward investors, especially the Japanese, there was an insistence that a percentage of the materials should be sourced either in the United Kingdom or in other European countries. He will be aware that many companies in Wales, especially the Gooding Sanken Group, have taken advantage of that.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes. My point is that there is pressure for insistence on a growing percentage of local sourcing. We want a far more definitive strategy from the Secretary of State and from the Welsh Development Agency so that we can tap into the growing potential. Sony is now sourced heavily from within the United Kingdom, as is Nissan in Sunderland. One of the companies that is coming into my area will produce goods for the new markets and new opportunities created by the first generation of inward investors.

Are we moving to a new plane raising our sights and setting targets in view of the potential job creation in Wales resulting from those developments? Is there, for example, a view on the enormous Bosch development adjacent to the M4 within 15 minutes' journey time of my community? What strategy has been adopted to ensure that, as a result of the Bosch development, jobs in the components industry will be created in the community of Merthyr Tydfil? We cannot fit the Bosches into our valley communities. We do not have great land sites—we do not need them. We need to create 2,000 to 3,000 jobs as a spin-off from other investments. I should like a lot more. I should like to hear the chairman of the WDA and the Secretary of State overtly, deliberately and consciously in a planned fashion reaching out to the new potential market for jobs in our community. Perhaps they do so behind the scenes.

Unless the Minister of State can prove otherwise, the trouble is that, after all those efforts, information on the Welsh economy is appalling. The paucity of information about the Welsh economy strikes one. Those are not my words; they are the words of the most recently published document, entitled "Valley Skills", an inward investment study. That document came out of the Welsh Office last week, and it states:

> "The paucity of information on a number of basic issues is a theme running through this report".

The report makes that point very well. There is a paucity of information about what skills we have and what skills we need.

If there is enormous potential for jobs within the new inward investment that has already occurred, how will we

[Mr. Rowlands]

attract them? How will Merthyr, Rhymney, Neath, Pontypridd or Llanelli attract those jobs? There are two methods—one involves the role that the WDA has been and is playing, and with which it is only beginning to come to terms, as was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli. The first is a traditional method. I do not dismiss it. Perhaps my hon. Friends went too far in saying that we have the necessary property. I am not much interested in property, but I am certainly interested in land reclamation. I am certainly interested in the building of modern industrial real estate in communities such as mine, because at least one has something physical to offer and to market, and that is extremely important. That is why I was concerned about and interested in the WDA budget figures for the next couple of years.

In the public expenditure White Paper on the Welsh Office there is a decline in net expenditure by the Welsh Office to the Welsh Development Agency from £85 million or £90 million in 1991-92 to £64 million in two years. That is a drop of more than £20 million in the contribution from the Welsh Office. However, the figure for the gross budget remains at £160 million. It is for the Minister of State to justify the figures, but it seems that the budget will be sustained by increasing rents on new properties from £32 per sq m to £45 per sq m—a good contribution to industrial inflation. I must say—and by existing average rents of the whole portfolio rising from £15 to £24 per sq m.

The second method is a huge divestment of properties. I am not arguing the merits or demerits; that is not my concern at the moment. My concern is whether that will happen and, if it does not happen, what will happen to the WDA budget. The forecast is to go from the current sales this year of 74,000 sq m to 300,000 sq m. That will be three times as much property sold. My right hon. Friend made a point about preoccupation with property. There will be tremendous preoccupation to reach those figures. I cast doubt because the figure for 1991 factory divestment was supposed to be 209,000 sq m this year. The achievement is 74,000 sq m. Given that track record, it is reasonable to ask whether, if we do not reach those figures, and if there is a shortfall in factory sales, the budget will be made up by the Welsh Office and the Secretary of State in the coming year. That is all I ask, and I should like an answer to that question, because we are dependent on that budget.

A major new matter to which the WDA must pay attention is the attraction of our communities, as my right hon. Friend rightly pointed out. It gives me nightmares to watch our society being de-skilled and to watch many people's skills becoming redundant. I remember marching a couple of Fridays ago. Banners were being waved; it was a romantic moment. Pragmatically, I asked the chairman of the lodge committee, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I don't know yet. I am a trained electrician; I was trained by British Coal. The electrics that I know are totally redundant in the world outside. I was a good Coal Board electrician, but I am not an electrician for the new age. I asked British Coal, with all its job shops, to train me again. They said, 'No, we will not train you again, because we have already trained you once.'" From British Coal, British Gas and British Telecom and the South West electricity board came a generation with good training skills. Privatised companies will let us down on training, just as manufacturing is letting us down on training.

One of the real ironies is what we read in many documents, the latest and glossiest of which is the strategic guidance from the Secretary of State, entitled "Skills and Enterprise: An Agenda for Wales". It was released yesterday. I thought that it was a Labour party policy document, it looks so good and colourful, but it is minus the content. It states:

> "The Secretary of State therefore invites Welsh TECs, working with the WDA and DBRW, to develop proposals for a coherent framework of services on skills that the development agencies can market to inward investors."

It is recognised that we shall need skills and market them to attract new jobs and new opportunities to our community. Training is supposed to be employer-led, but I must tell the Secretary of State that employers are not training. We are depending on the very people who have let us down. I do not say that that is the cause of the recession, but they have cut the money that has previously been spent on training. We are turning to a manufacturing and trading base that does not exist. If it exists, it has shrunk to a level that is incapable of sustaining a new training initiative of any character.

Another worrying matter—it relates to the electrician from Penallta—is that the type of training being offered is often out of date. I recently went to a fine training skills centre. It shook me rigid that people were being taught old-fashioned skills and on old-fashioned machinery. It is true that many of those people will go into factories with such machinery, so we are training for the here and now if not for the past, but there is a new generation of manufacturing, and production techniques. Hoover in Merthyr is demonstrating that. Any new inward investor will bring modern manufacturing training and machinery to our communities. We shall have to offer people who will understand and have a feel for that type of production and the training that goes with it, but who will prepare the new generation for the next five or 10 years? Who will help middle-aged redundant people in communities such as mine?

We do not have the manufacturing base or training programmes to go with it. That is why, in the summer, I wrote a special programme and prepared a detailed analysis of what would be a manufacturing training programme for a community such as mine. I put a proposal that we create a centre of excellence. I appreciate my right hon. Friend's point that we may have to send our people to Japan and elsewhere, but we could train them in our own communities, but that would require much more intervention and greater effort to create opportunities for our people. The WDA, alongside our TECs, will have to play a more fundamental part in educating the new generation so that, when we invite and attract new companies to our areas, we will offer not only major new industrial real estate, new factories, and financial assistance, but a community with modern skills, ready to attract modern industry to create a modern economy for the Wales of the 1990s.

6.49 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I agree with some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), especially about the paucity of the information available to us about existing

skills in Wales, the skills that we need and therefore the importance of a skills audit. He is also right to say that it is at a local level that we can best assess the skills that are needed. My worry about the training and enterprise councils is that they cover too big an area. Sometimes the local authorities know best exactly what skills training we need. The district council in my constituency has played a dramatic role in our area's economic and industrial regeneration. There needs to be much greater integration between the local authorities and the TECs on matters relating to training and skills needed.

Although, as I have said, I respect some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, he will not be surprised if I disagree with him about the recession. He was unfair in looking at the British economy and British interest rates in isolation. My latest information was that the Labour party had been converted in its thinking on Europe. We must look at the British economy and British interest rates in the European context and bear in mind the fact that we are not the only country in an economic recession: other countries are in the same position.

In addition, the level of our interest rates is now directly affected by factors outside our control, ranging from the strength of the peseta in the exchange rate mechanism, the fact that the German Government have taken on the enormous task of regenerating east Germany with the consequent impact on Germany's interest rates, and even that, according to the chief of staff at the White House, President Bush may have made certain impromptu and spontaneous remarks on a golf course.

All those factors are outside our control but, in the global economic village in which we now live, they have a direct effect on our economy and interest rates. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will nod their heads vigorously at that, because nobody could be keener to reduce interest rates than the Government, especially as we have only a few more months to run of this Parliament and we are desirous of re-election. As I have said, we must look at our economy and interest rates in an international context.

I must apologise to the House in advance for not being able to be present to hear the replies to the debate, but, like hon. Members of all parties, I am glad to have the opportunity to support the Bill. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there is no doubt that the Welsh Development Agency has made an immense contribution to the Welsh economy and to the industrial regeneration of the Principality. I have direct experience of that in my constituency, where the partnership between the WDA, the Welsh Office and the local authorities has been remarkable.

If I had to specify one local authority, I should like to pay tribute to Delyn borough council. That partnership has been to the enormous benefit of local people. I remember the dark days of 1985 and the closure of Courtauld's greenfield site where over 800 people were made redundant. That had a multiplier effect on the local economy, with a further 400 or 500 redundancies. Male unemployment in Flint and Holywell approached 40 per cent.

There has been a dramatic improvement since then. The local economy used to be far too concentrated on only three industries—coal, steel and textiles. However, thanks to the partnership between the Welsh Office, the WDA and the local authorities, it is now much more diversified. That would not have been possible without the contribution of the Welsh Development Agency, especially in the Delyn enterprise zone and the Greenfield business park.

Public sector pump-priming has led to the regeneration of our local economy and is one of the principal reasons why the economy of Delyn is far more resilient in this recession. Our local economy is far more diversified and is therefore far more flexible and capable of resisting this recession, with the result that it is not having so terrible an impact on employment, on local families and on the entire social fabric of our community. Those dark days have gone. I am sure that we shall come out of this recession stronger than we were before, that the local economy will diversity still more and that it will therefore be strengthened still further.

I agree with the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that it is important that, as the private sector takes over the provision of factory space in the more accessible areas—those with the better connections to the motorway network—the WDA follows the dualling of the A55 into north-west Wales. That is where public sector pump-priming is now needed. We have seen the creation of new, private industrial estates in north-east Wales—in Wrexham Maelor, and in Alyn and Deeside.

Although we do not always hear this from Opposition Members, those new private industrial estates and business parks have been a tremendous advance but they would not have been established without initial public sector pump-priming. That is what originally regenerated those areas and made it possible for the private sector successfully to become involved. We must now move that public sector pump-priming further along the north Wales coast, and into the rural areas, to help to regenerate those local economies also.

I join my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in paying tribute to the WDA's extraordinary record on inward investment. Many countries may well have been seeking to establish plants in the European Community as we approach the creation of the single market, but the WDA has taken the initiative. It has not been passive. Thank goodness, the part of the organisation responsible for inward investment has been renamed Welsh Development International. At least one of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs has been adopted. I am also glad that we now have a European office in Brussels.

It is amazing that, although the Government usually respond negatively to our Select Committee reports—we are now accustomed to that and can almost dictate the Government's response—a couple of years later, they undergo a Damascene conversion and come round to our point of view. It seems that the Select Committee is sometimes ahead of the Welsh Office. We can only hope that if the Select Committee comes out in favour of a Welsh Assembly, the Welsh Office will eventually follow us on that as well—who knows? The WDA deserves credit for its extraordinary achievement and active involvement in inward investment. The investment may well have been going to come to Europe, but the WDA has made sure that it has come to Wales and it deserves full credit for that.

I intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on the issue of economic and monetary union, on which he and I disagree. The right hon. Gentleman said that that would have a devastating impact on Wales, but he did not convince me. He did not give any specific details of how that would occur. My view

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

is that there will be a devastating effect on Wales if we do not have a single currency or join in economic and monetary union. If we remain outside, much of the inward investment in the Principality will be under tremendous pressure from their parent companies to relocate to the mainland of Europe.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has not commented on that. She concentrates on the symbolism of sovereignty, but I am afraid that I am less concerned about sovereignty, which to me is a commodity that is to be ceded, shared and pooled to the benefit of my constituents; I am more concerned about their jobs and future livelihoods. I am not concerned about the idealism of sovereignty. Indeed, we gave up sovereignty when we entered the Community—or, at least, we ceded or pooled some of it.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley signed the Single European Act, she ceded sovereignty. When we joined the ERM, we merged still more of our sovereignty with that of our partners with whose currencies we strongly linked our own. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his two predecessors have all seen sovereignty as a commodity to be ceded, pooled, shared and merged to the advantage of our people—and long may that continue. Whatever they may say, that is what they have done, and that must continue.

We must not be left outside the inner currency circle, because that would have a devastating effect on the Welsh economy. The WDA's solid record of achievement in inward investment would be in danger of being undermined if we stand apart and are isolated.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli on what I hope I may call his overall view of Europe. We are not geographically well placed, because we are on the edge of the continent. The continent's centre of gravity is now moving eastwards. Following the unification of Germany and the opening up of eastern Europe, we are now facing a changed situation. That is why it is tremendously important that the Government strongly support the WDA—and other agencies in the United Kingdom, such as Scottish Enterprise—by increased investment in our infrastructure. This is crucial because, if we stand outside a single currency, inward investment might well relocate to the mainland of Europe. If we do not get our infrastructure up to scratch, we shall lose inward investment, particularly to the so-called golden triangle between London, Paris and Hamburg—principally, the Pas de Calais area.

The Select Committee held an inquiry into the impact of the channel tunnel on Wales. Members who were involved and took part in the visit to France will be well aware of how much further ahead the French are in providing the infrastructure for the tunnel at their end. In terms of both rail and road connections, I estimate that the French are 10 to 15 years ahead. I find this frightening.

At a meeting, the French ambassador talked about a second channel tunnel being started within two years of completion of the first. I wish that we had that kind of positive thinking that, in the words of Iain Macleod, when the ball rolls our way, we would grab it and run. We have not done so in regard to infrastructure. There is therefore a danger that we shall lose out. However much the WDA does about inward investment, if our infrastructure is not up to scratch, we shall be in great danger of losing future investment projects to the mainland of Europe.

We heard from the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) about land reclamation and industrial dereliction in south Wales. Great sacrifices have been made by the Welsh people and the Scottish people at various times in our recent economic history, in the interests of the nation as a whole. It it time for the people of Kent to realise that we have made sacrifices for the British economy and the welfare of our people in terms of connections, especially freight connections, between the channel tunnel and London—and beyond, to the Principality and further north. It is perhaps now the turn of people in the south to make a similar sacrifice.

I do not for a moment underrate the importance of the environment, but it must not be allowd to obstruct what is essential to the future economy of our country. The French have a highly centralised planning system compared with ours, and I do not wish to impose that on our people, but we must take a more positive attitude, make a more determined effort.

When the people of Amiens rise in protest and march down their streets it is because the high-speed connection to the channel tunnel does not go through their town but bypasses it. I do not expect the people of Kent to go to that extreme, but there must be a change of attitude. We must get our infrastructure right and do so quickly; otherwise, we shall lose out permanently.

Mr. Livsey: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on British Rail's announcement last week that passengers from south Wales to the continent will have to get off the train at Paddington and go by underground to Waterloo? In the Welsh Select Committee, the chairman of British Rail promised us that we would have cross-platform changes at Waterloo. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that one hour will be wasted in the passage from south Wales to Paris?

Mr. Raffan: We discussed that with the Minister for Public Transport in the Select Committee. Ministers sometimes change jobs so quickly that I cannot keep up with who is in the post. Several important points came out of that Select Committee discussion. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that I want to avoid getting bogged down in detail, but it appears at times that the Department of Transport looks in a blinkered way at the transport problems of London, such as the rail link to Heathrow, and new tube links, without co-ordinating them and integrating them into the channel tunnel network. We need a much more integrated and coherent transport policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Raffan: I will bring my speech directly back to the WDA. I will forgive the hon. Gentleman for having distracted me.

If the WDA is to be given every opportunity to do what it should do for the economy of Wales, it must not be held back by a lack of adequate transport infrastructure. A team effort has been made to attract inward investment, and in Delyn it is between the WDA, the Welsh Office and the local authorities. Equally, in the all-Wales context, there is a partnership between the WDA, the Welsh Office

and Government Departments in Whitehall. Others are involved. We cannot consider what the WDA does in isolation.

Economic development and our ability to attract inward investment can be held back by a lack of adequate infrastructure, which is the Government's responsibility. Now that we have a Prime Minister who travels by rail, perhaps we shall see dramatically increased investment in the railways in the years to come.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke about a Europe of the regions. He mentioned the strong relationship that he and his fellow Ministers had built up with the four motor regions of Lombardy, Catalonia, Baden-Wurttemberg and Rhône-Alpes. I am strongly in favour of all those developments, but I would like to hear from the Minister more detail about how the Welsh Office sees the Europe of the regions liaising with the WDA, and the impact of the one on the other.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke in a recent speech on the periphery of the Conservative party conference about the need for an inter-regional body, although he was vague about its aims and powers. It would be an advisory body which would enhance accountability and administer structural funds. I should like to know how such a body might affect the WDA.

Infrastructure is, of course, also important in each of our constituencies. I worry about the division of responsibility for roads between the Welsh Office and the counties. The two do not necessarily integrate their road construction plans. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who is not here at the moment, and I have occasionally worked in tandem. We have sometimes shocked the Minister of State by appearing in his office together to discuss this issue.

I have long been worried by the lack of access link roads between the A55 and the industrial estates in my constituency and the tourist areas. If the vast investment of £500 per head—not all of which was spent on the Conwy tunnel—on dualling the A55 is to be worth while, we must have adequate link access roads. We must also have an improved British Rail network, especially in the north of the Principality.

I do not wish to digress too far, but the matters to which I have referred are crucial to the WDA. The agency cannot go to a potential inward investor—whether from overseas or from England—and seek investment without adequate infrastructure. That is the part which the Government must play in the partnership.

The Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency is the last remaining pit in north Wales. It was recently announced that it would switch from the long wall system of mining —I shall not give way to any technical interventions from the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on this matter—to the pillar and stall or board and pile system. I am relieved that the hon. Member for Pontypridd is still nodding in agreement. I have been briefed by British Coal on these matters, which is more than can be said for the shadow Secretary of State for Energy.

This change will secure the future viability of the pit. It involves a significant investment. The pilot scheme will involve investment of £2·3 million. Sadly, the new tunnelling method is not labour-intensive, so at the end of 1993 the work force at Point of Ayr will be reduced from the current 496 to just under 300.

It is important that the WDA responds to this situation. We have had the announcement in advance, so we have time to prepare for the loss of jobs. I am grateful for British Coal's reassurance that there will be no compulsory redundancies. The job losses will affect not only my constituents but those of the hon. Member for Wrexham. The homes of the work force are spread over a wide area. We look to the WDA to work closely with British Coal Enterprise, which also does an important job. Again, a partnership can ensure that the impact of the redundancies on the local community is minimised. We must help those miners who are enterprising and want to start their own companies, and attract other investment into the area. We must ensure that these redundancies do not have a dramatic impact on the fabric of social life in the community. That is important, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to respond.

I am trying desperately to make an unprovocative speech as I am demob happy, but I could not help noticing that the Labour leader of Clwyd county council, Councillor Dennis Parry, said that he would seek a commitment for further investment from Lord Haslam. He seems to be a little out of date: British Coal's chairman is now Mr. Clark. The board of British Coal has already accepted a proposal for further investment at Point of Ayr. I hope that Mr. Parry and I will contact Mr. Clark together. I have already spoken to British Coal. British Coal and the Welsh Development Agency need to work together to minimise the impact of redundancies.

I am prepared to give the Labour party the credit for setting up the WDA, if Opposition Members are prepared to give us credit for the zeal of the converted in providing it with considerable resources over the past decade. Opposition Members, including those on the Front Bench, have welcomed the increased resources and the great good use to which they have been put to the benefit of the Welsh people.

I do not want to enter into past arguments. There is no question of the WDA disappearing, or of its offices abroad being closed, now that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is no longer Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. If ever there was a tribute to the effectiveness of the WDA, it was when he was groaning grumpily about the unfair advantage WDA offices overseas gave us in attracting inward investment into the Principality. Backhanded though it was, there could be no greater compliment to the effectiveness of the agency and its leaders.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned the enormous amount of money that has now been spent by the agency—more than £1 billion. I am concerned about the accountability of the agency, not merely to the Government but to the House. Ultimately, it must be accountable to the House.

I would not want the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs to be so ineffective that, like the Scottish Select Committee, it might as well not exist. It should be reconstituted. We must move away from the present position that membership of the Committee is in proportion to party membership in the House as a whole. It should be formed in proportion to party strength in Wales alone. The Government should not worry about that. If the Welsh Select Committee is to be effective, it should be constituted in proportion to the number of hon. Members each party has in the Principality.

I am in favour of effective Select Committees, although I am not in favour of serving on them for eight years—as I had done until my resignation earlier this year. One

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Parliament is the maximum time that any Member of Parliament should serve on such a Committee because it involves a heavy work load.

On the WDA and its accountability to this House, it is important that the chairman and chief executive of the WDA should appear regularly before the Select Committee, especially when such a large amount of public money is being spent. We adopted the Select Committee system from the United States. I shall not enter into the controversy that has appeared in the press about who stayed at what hotel between what legs of an inward investment mission. It demeans hon. Members to make such comments. I hope that we can all rise above that.

The chairman, the chief executive and their colleagues in the WDA work hard and do a good job. However, the appointment of the chairman and chief executive are of great importance. They are responsible for the disbursement of such large amounts of public money that they should be subject to hearings in Select Committee, although those do not have to be as grandiose and pompous as confirmation hearings in the United States. That would be an improvement in the workings of the House.

That might get us away from small-minded early-day motions and the petty personal criticism of the people involved. With hearings there would be some sort of cross-party consensus on appointments, so the appointee would be more likely to be above the party political fray and less liable to be dragged down into it so frequently.

Select Committees should have greater power. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will consider that—especially the Whip on duty, who is busily writing at a rapid rate and I hope is including all these constructive thoughts in his notes, although the Government may not like my suggestion, because it diffuses power, taking it away from the Government. However, greater accountability would ensure the better working of the Welsh Development Agency.

How can we make the agency fully accountable? By setting up a Welsh assembly. I am almost a lone voice in this cause on the Conservative Benches. I am not worried about that. I do not say that where I go others will necessarily follow, although other Welsh Conservative Members are in favour of various forms of devolution. Ultimately, the WDA and all public sector bodies in Wales should be answerable to an assembly. That would lead to more effective, efficient government and would ultimately help the agency. That will come.

I am not saying that where Scotland goes, we shall inevitably follow, but the intensity of the debate in Scotland convinces me that it will not be long before an assembly is set up there, whatever may be said from the Government Front Bench at the moment, and that ultimately Wales will follow. I hope that the Government's conversion to the setting up of assemblies in Wales and Scotland will be as wholehearted, as convincing and as financially generous as our conversion to the establishment of the WDA.

7.15 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): It is always a pleasure to follow a thoughtful speech and there are rarely any more thoughtful than those by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). He suggested a number of challenging ideas. I certainly do not agree with them all, but he always makes me think. I wish that I heard that sort of speech more often from the Conservative Benches.

We have heard many condemnatory and self-righteous statements about attacks on various people. Wales is a small land. One of our great arts is probably gossiping about each other and we are brilliant at sticking knives into each other. There is no question about that.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): Surely not?

Dr. Howells: The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is one of the finest knife wielders that it has ever been my pleasure to encounter.

The chairman of the Welsh Development Agency is as tough a cookie as I have ever met. I am sure that he is well able to handle himself in any situation. As a believer in blood being thicker than water, I shall say little about him because I go mountain climbing with his first cousin. Although they are on opposite sides of the fence politically—about as far apart as it is possible to be—when one is dangling at the end of a rope and has fears about family ties, caution is needed.

The WDA has done a splendid job. It has helped enormously to transform the Welsh economy. We have heard about the high quality of inward investment that has come to Wales. The big search is still on and has brought record bonuses this year for more inward investment.

The WDA has been responsible for ensuring that the investment that has come to Wales has gone out with more added value. In the case of the best inward investment, we have added value to it and we can begin to sell it abroad. That must be a critical aim of any inward investment.

I understand from the agency's publications that it aims to "grow" small and medium-sized firms—that is a gardening term that it is now common in business. Wales has about 3,000 firms employing between 50 and 500 people. About two thirds of them are involved in manufacturing industry and about 1,000 are in the service sector. It worries me, however, that, although the WDA has played a positive role in trying to make those firms grow, it is subject to some criticisms. I do not want to criticise the disasters that we have seen—the Parrot corporation, the fly-by-night cowboys who came in, took the money and ran, and the bad investments. They are bound to happen. The point of the hon. Member for Delyn on accountability is important in that respect. Select Committees have an important role in monitoring that side of the business.

Some matters perplex me and I hope that the Minister can help. I see that he is having a briefing at the moment, understandably. Some time ago some colleagues and I sought clarification from the Welsh Office about why the WDA could help, for example, a Japanese firm seeking to settle in Wales and to develop its business, yet could not help, let us say, a group of coal miners who might wish to take advantage of the dearth in supply of high-quality anthracite by opening up a new mine or expanding an existing small mine. There have been serious problems of that sort.

Several private firms have approached British Coal, which has a monopoly in these affairs. It is the only body that can issue licences to mine coal. Those firms approached British Coal with a view to purchasing mines that British Coal had closed or intended to close. They

were treated appallingly. For example, Ryans International, a firm based in St. Mellons in Cardiff tried to purchase the Blaenant colliery in the Dulais valley and the Cwmgwili colliery in the Gwendraeth. Both mines have substantial reserves. Both suffered badly from the inflexible technological approaches that the hon. Gentleman mentioned with regard to Point of Ayr. Yet, those firms were denied the opportunity to employ men and mine the coal profitably, not simply on a British or European basis, but on a world basis. Ryans International is confident that it can produce coal at sufficiently low prices to export it to European member states. The price might be as low as £20 or £25 a tonne. I understand that as many as 600 jobs could be tied up in such a project in the Vale of Neath alone. The WDA should have a role in that.

Wales has gradually struck away from its identity as a coal mining area. That is fair enough. None of us wants to go back to those dreadful days of colliery accidents and pneumoconiosis—that image of Wales. We want to nurse our resources in the best way possible and to bring into fruition a new era of coal mining. That new era could be led by such projects.

If we are prepared to risk capital on firms from the other side of the world or on individuals with appalling track records, without checking up on them before giving them money, we should think seriously before turning down the justifiable approaches of companies with great experience in mining which could do a good job.

Mr. Denzil Davies: There seems to be a tendency to disparage coal completely. The new high-tech industries are fine, but the anthracite coalfields could be developed. Does my hon. Friend agree that the WDA is well placed to help in that development?

Dr. Howells: I could not agree more. My right hon. Friend makes the point clear. The Government must think seriously about what they will do with British Coal's right to hand out licences.

British Coal is retreating from south Wales for bad, unimaginative reasons. The Government are not being energetic and intervening to ensure that it stays. The Government could intervene by encouraging the WDA to recognise the best projects that have been mooted by people who are interested in mining coal in south Wales. If British Coal will not mine it, let some one else do so. Those are revolutionary words from these Benches. I am advocating competition—competition against a monopoly that has done no good whatever in south Wales, certainly not in the past decade.

I hope that the Minister will look carefully at that and perhaps give the WDA the right at least to begin considering the matter. Some of our hardest-hit areas could be helped and much could be done to alleviate the criminal prices that we are paying for specialist coals such as anthracite and coking coal.

I congratulate the agency on its achievements in the environment. I know that that has been played down and earlier the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) pooh-poohed it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) pointed out, the transformation of the landscape plays a great part in transforming the mentality of people. It is important to eradicate the worst of what we have had to put up with for years. That is one of the WDA's great achievements.

To revert briefly to what I was talking about a few seconds ago, there is a hidden agenda on mining. It is that we should extract that anthracite and coking coal by opencast coal mining. There is an alternative. People are ready to mine coal just as cheaply, but without ravaging our landscape. The WDA has done enormous work cleaning up our landscapes, especially our derelict areas. It would be short-sighted and criminal to undo that work, albeit temporarily, simply because there is not the imagination to put forward an alternative way of extracting it.

I hope that the WDA will be given the means to help local authorities move on to the whole business of cleaning up the environment. I know that it is keen not merely to take away the slag heaps from the mining and steel industries, but to help local authorities to clear up the stench from chemical factories, the dust from steel works and so on. The agency plays a central role in all that and I hope that it will continue to do so.

My hon Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked about the sale of property. I understand that the administrative budget is about £167 million a year. In the current year the WDA is expected to raise about £35 million from the sale of properties and next year it is to raise £50 million. My hon. Friend's analysis of future provision of factory space and so on was good. I wish to ask a different question: what will happen when the Welsh Office, understandably, pushes for a higher proportion of funding to come from the sale of property? What happens when it has no property left to sell? We shall, indeed, be considering the construction of empty sheds, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, North described it. I should like some answers on that.

I am troubled by rumours. I know that Members of Parliament should not listen to rumours and I do not expect Ministers to confirm them. I have heard from various management consultants that it is said throughout the Treasury that the WDA's budget is large. Questions are perhaps asked about whether it should be reduced, whether the agency should be broken up along the lines of Scottish Enterprise, which is a disastrous reorganisation, or, at the very least, whether the agency should have its property function—a major generator of income—hived off.

The WDA is focusing on the right targets. For example, it is seeking to improve a woefully inadequate skills base in Wales and is trying to promote technology transfer, about which we have not heard much in the debate. Our technology transfer infrastructure is a grossly under-developed sector in Wales, as it is in most regions of the United Kingdom. The WDA is also forging European links with some of the most robust regional economies in Europe. The aims are to develop new opportunities for Welsh firms and to learn about the best practice available from some of the more innovative continental development agencies.

While those initiatives do not have a direct job creation role, and might therefore be subject to some criticism from the Treasury, they have potential for generating employment in the longer term as well as enhancing the innovative and competitive basis of the Welsh economy.

One of the most crucial areas of the initiatives—as mentioned in the excellent contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney—is the issue of training on a Wales-wide basis. The Welsh Office has now absorbed the training, enterprise and education

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directorate. The north-west region of Britain has a good regionwide training and enterprise council network, with a single contact person to liaise with the EC in Brussels. That point was made well by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). That is an extremely important development and one must ask what is happening in Wales on that front. As a region, what are we doing in Wales to exploit EC training opportunities? Will the Welsh Office now play a more co-ordinating role, with the help of the WDA, in that sphere? Although I feel that the WDA would like to play a co-ordinating role with the TECs, that idea has been largely ruled out by the Welsh Office, which of course wants a hundred flowers to bloom, so to speak; it would like each TEC to do its own thing. The training places that have been cut out by the TECs should be restored as soon as possible.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It might help if I cleared up that point immediately. The co-ordinating role for education and training clearly belongs to the Welsh Office. The TECs have been established, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware, but he will also be aware that the strategy document mentioned by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) refers to the strategy being related in particular to inward investment. The hon. Gentleman will be further aware of our co-ordinating role in the Welsh Office on further and higher education, following the passage of the Further and Higher Education Bill which is now in the other place.

Dr. Howells: I thank the Minister for that useful piece of information and I am glad that the Welsh Office has moved in that direction. But there must be far greater co-ordination, if only between the work that is going on in the WDA and the other areas to which I referred. I have grave doubts about the wisdom of TECs doing their own thing without that co-ordination. I can see the virtues in allowing more local identification and initiative, but it needs more macro co-ordination.

On the whole issue of technology transfer and innovation, the WDA needs more support from the Welsh Office to promote the take-up of United Kingdom and EC funds. For example, the take-up of Department of Trade and Industry schemes for innovation and technology transfer appears to be very low. I shall be interested in anything the Minister can say about that.

The Welsh Office take-up of research and development funds from the EC is similarly low. That was exposed recently in an article in *The Western Mail*. Again, it is a Welsh Office rather than a WDA responsibility and I hope that the Minister will explain what the Government intend to do about that crucial area.

A number of issues affecting the Welsh economy should be aired. The first and foremost is how Wales is faring in the current recession, which is undermining much of the positive work that has been done in the past six years. Although the recession hit Wales later than some other regions, notably the south-east of England, we are also in the midst of it now, witness rising unemployment since the spring of 1990.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, North, who unfortunately is not in his place, made the interesting point that this week's fall in the Welsh level of unemployment was the first since April last year. There have been rising business failures and falling output. It would be interesting to know how Wales compares with other regions on those three critical indices.

I hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House appreciate that that is not trying to talk down Wales. It is trying to address the continuing fight to restructure the Welsh economy in such a way that its reaction to recession and downturn, when it occurs, is stronger than at present.

Apart from the current recession, there is the deep-seated problem of low per capita income in general and low pay in particular. Those points were made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). The low per capita income rates in Wales have not improved. Indeed, I understand from Welsh Office statistics that real wages in Wales have been declining relative to the rest of the United Kingdom and they seem to be declining in some of our key industries, such as electronics and motor components.

It would be helpful if the Minister would provide figures for Wales relative to the United Kingdom as a whole, for our recent success in attracting inward investment may have been due as much to low pay as to anything else. I hope that that is not true, but it may be true and it seems that it could be playing a part in recent developments.

In the inward investment battles of the 1990s, Wales will not be able to compete with the new low-cost zones of eastern Europe. Nor should we want to compete on that basis. I suggest that we concentrate, in terms of the economy, on unemployment and real wages, which are two critical indicators of well-being. They are not to be denigrated by any suggestion that Opposition Members want to talk down Wales. We need an improvement in our vocational education and training system to improve the take-up of United Kingdom and EC policies for research, development, innovation and technology transfer. We must improve the evaluation of WDA and Welsh Office initiatives.

We have too little information in those areas, an information deficit which is no small academic matter, for unless we know where Wales really stands compared with other regions of the United Kingdom, we shall be subjected to the kind of economic miracle hype that we have had for the past 10 years and are still getting.

We have made some great strides towards creating a new identity for the economy of Wales and the WDA has played a part in that. But there is still a long way to go. We can build on the great strengths that we have and I hope that the Government will ensure that the WDA continues to play a central role in that construction.

7.38 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The two interesting and analytical speeches of the hon. Members for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) will be good reading for the board, chief executive and chair of the Welsh Development Agency. They pinpointed a number of issues to which I shall return, in particular about information research and the links between development and job creation and investment and higher education.

It is extremely important for the Welsh economy in connection with economic and monetary union that we move rapidly to integration in the European Community economy and society. Out of that will come stability for

Wales, provided that we strengthen regional policies within the Community so that we do not become a periphery of a periphery.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): While it is generally accepted that, if a single currency is adopted, a massive amount of funds will have to be transferred from the richer to the poorer countries, has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that, in the context of a wider Europe, the regions of the United Kingdom may no longer be regarded as the poorer parts of Europe? Rather, the transfer of funds would be from the northern countries to the much poorer countries of southern Europe.

Dr. Thomas: I am aware of the debate on regional policy, which is why the Opposition Members who have just spoken have all argued for strengthening the regional infrastructure rather than depending on transfer payments. I regard transfer payments as a transitional phase in regional policy because, unless a region can become more self-sustaining in terms of its development, its future cannot be guaranteed. I do not wish to enter an argument in which people say—some hon. Members seem to be expressing this view today—that investment should not take place in the southern states of the Community, new member states, or east Germany because that would disadvantage Wales. We need to ensure that all those regions have a more sustainable level of development. That is the challenge that we must face in the third generation of European regional policy.

The Welsh Development Agency allows us to have a flexible form of intervention and partnership with the market economy. It is a tribute to the nature of Welsh public policy culture that the agency and the Welsh Office, far from becoming restricted in their activity under the Conservative Government, have widened and deepened their activities. It is not sufficiently recognised by those who look at the Welsh political system from the outside that Wales has developed a distinctive way of operating. It is a kind of 1960s corporatism without some of its worst features. The tenure of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) symbolised that. The bringing together of trade unions, management, local authorities and the agencies is a feature of the scale of Wales. Bringing together those activities has enabled decisions, particularly on the location of projects, to be made faster than they have been made elsewhere.

We have already heard about the links between the regions of Europe. Wales has got in on the act because, when areas such as Cataluña were seeking a partner in the United Kingdom, its governmental infrastructure was already in place, albeit not with the democracy that exists in Cataluña with an elected Generaletat or Parliament. So it was possible for the Government of Cataluña and the other regions to relate directly to the Government of Wales in the Welsh Office. I shall ask the Minister to report back from Cataluña later.

Our political culture has enabled us to develop internal and external infrastructure. The Welsh Development Agency has played a key role in that and has taken its particular form of partnership intervention in all sectors of our economy. I was interested in the latest development, perhaps not of post-socialism but certainly of post-Marxism, which was outlined by the hon. Member for Pontypridd when he proposed competition in the energy sector and challenged the WDA and the Welsh Office to allow it to take place. Within a residual public sector, it is important that agencies such as the WDA can play an innovative role. If the new monopolies that are created out of privatisations are not to be responsive to the needs of a smaller scale activity, the WDA should be able to intervene flexibly.

The WDA's activity in relation to multi-national capital and inward investment has been discussed at length. I shall not repeat the points that have been raised except to say that, with the current international movement of capital within the economy, it is crucial to test how effective the agency's international role has been and is. The need to target potential investors and growth sectors more accurately arises now that we are in recession.

I am particularly interested in highlighting the WDA's activity in relation to small and medium sized enterprises and the so-called "third sector"—community enterprise and co-operation. I declare an interest because of my involvement with several of those community enterprise agencies in Wales and the WDA's activities with them. The agencies work, especially its rural initiative programmes, shows how bottom-up incentive activity, which is mobilising resources and capital within the community, can lead to effective small-scale job creation. At that level and at the level of small and medium size enterprise, the technology transfer question and the development of infrastructure are particularly important. Technology transfer means not only large-scale transfers but also transfers to smaller enterprises—sometimes single, two or three-person enterprises—which can provide a stable economic growth in a peripheral niche of the economy.

An infrastructure does not mean simply the magnificent Sir Wyn Roberts' memorial tunnel at Conwy, but also the essential need to ensure that we have information technology and telecommunication networks throughout Wales. The rural development initiatives are so important because, as we look to the future, we see that it is now possible, through new technology, to establish effective businesses and communicate effectively. The development of the so-called telecommunications cottage industries is important to the peripheral areas of the Welsh economy. The WDA and the Development Board for Rural Wales are keenly involved in that sector. The Minister of State and I hope to attend a conference tomorrow when I hope that he will make some announcements about that sector. In the past 10 years we have developed a network of local enterprise agencies which come together in a national organisation. There again, Welsh Office, WDA and DBRW support is crucial. Those activities have been tapping entrepreneurial resources that were not obviously present within the Welsh economy. It is important that the Welsh Office should continue to encourage that.

The international role of the agency and the Welsh Office is one of the most exciting developments of recent years. It includes the relationship between Wales and the four motor regions of Baden-Württemberg, Cataluña, Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy. That activity represents the future development of regional policy within the community——

Mr. Morgan: Was the hon. Gentleman about to confirm what I was saying, that the motor regions would not let Wales join their group because they thought that we were the exhaust pipe while they were the motor car?

Dr. Thomas: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Welsh Office concluded agreements on a range of activities with Baden-Württemberg and Cataluña. I understand that further agreements are to be made with another two regions. Far be it for me to speak on behalf of the Welsh Office, although I am willing to do so if called on. I am sure that the Minister of State will come back to that point when he winds up the debate, and give us a report on his latest visit to our friends in Cataluña.

Direct relationships with regions is crucial to the future regional policy within the community. As the hon. Member for Delyn said, the opening of the Brussels office was something that we proposed a long time ago in Select Committee. It shows how the structure of government in Wales, through the Welsh Office and the agency, can link directly with mainland activities in the rest of Europe. That seems to be the way in which future patterns of co-partnership investment in those regions should develop. That will lead to further diversication within the Welsh economy.

I wish to emphasise not just the networking with smaller-scale businesses and the private sector, but the need to relate the activity of the agency, to education and training. That subject has been touched on and I shall pursue it because we now have the opportunity to create for the first time an integrated education and training system for Wales. It all rests with the Welsh Office, which has responsibility for training education, including further and higher. I want the Welsh Office to develop an innovative strategy. I shall expand the point when we discuss a Bill which is not yet before the House, but is in another place. I hope that the new higher education funding council will direct its funds to sectors of innovation in research and development. I believe that the University of Wales has let us down badly over the years in terms of its so-called priorities in research and development. I speak as a graduate and postgraduate of that university.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most extraordinary claims from the Welsh education establishments and, indirectly, from the Welsh Office was to laud the decision by Imperial college, London to open a science park near Newport? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could tell me why the University of Wales did not open a science park near Newport—or anywhere else for that matter.

Dr. Thomas: I shall return to that point on Second Reading of the Further and Higher Education Bill. The University of Wales has not given sufficient priority to exploring opportunities for research and development related to the technological and economic needs of Wales. There are exceptions to that, such as research relating to the countryside and agriculture. However, I hope that the people now responsible for co-ordination of the federal structure of the university will investigate that issue; otherwise, many of us will argue that the federal structure of the university will become redundant once there is a higher education funding council.

When the new funding mechanisms—all of which are answerable to the Welsh Office and the Secretary of State—are in place, I hope that the Welsh Office will ensure that it has a strategy and a set of priorities. One of the priorities must be to develop a better relationship between the formal education sector of further and higher education, and training and enterprise councils. I welcome the activities of the TECs, but I am worried that we are not identifying the types of skill already available sufficiently clearly as a package when we consider further education opportunities. I agree with what was said earlier about the need to be sensitive to where the available skills are located and to the fact that the regions covered by TECs may be too large. We need an integrated approach to the levels of skills.

We also need to look to the agency and its continuing role in derelict land clearance and environmental activity. I should like the agency to develop its role so that it not only clears derelict land but develops the greening of its policies. We do not want the next generation of development in Wales to damage the environment. The European Community and the Government both have green priorities, but it is essential that all new and existing projects should be subject to a full environmental audit.

Any strategy for development must be a strategy for sustainable, resource-balanced development. Green priorities must be an integral part of the agency. Greening is not additional to economic activity but an integral part of it. The cost benefits of each project and development must be related to ecological cost benefit as well as any other cost benefit calculation. Wales still lags behind in terms of environmental assessments of new projects and the effects of existing projects.

I wish now to raise a constituency matter which will come as no news to the Minister of State or to other hon. Members—an ecological problem caused at Trawsfynydd. The nuclear power station has not produced electricity since at least February. A decision will be made sooner rather than later on whether to decommission the site within the national park. Clearly, serious choices will have to be made on the decommissioning aspects and the timetabling of the decommissioning. I shall not go into them in detail now, except to say that the decommissioning and cleaning out of that site must be done to the highest environmental and safety standards, and must be done completely.

There is no way I would accept a decision to maintain radioactive materials on that site in perpetuity. Much has been made of the Welsh work force and I would not accept it if the local work force at the site were gradually made redundant without an effective programme of alternative employment. I have called on a number of occasions, and do so again, for a similar policy attitude towards electricity generation closures such as that at Trawsfynydd as we have had in the past towards steel and coal closures.

Mr. Barry Jones *indicated assent.*

Dr. Thomas: I am glad to have the support of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones).

That district has, over a long period, had an almost mono-economy derived from the major extracting and generating industry. That employment potential will be lost and there must be a response to that. The Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency—the border cuts across the travel-to-work area of the power station—and the Welsh Office must be directly involved in the creation of alternative enterprise.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The hon. Gentleman knows of my interest in the matter. He knows that the Trawsfynydd power station has been closed down

since February because of technical problems and so on. I notice that the hon. Gentleman talks about decommissioning and the severe employment problems that would ensue. Is he of the mind that the Trawsfynydd power station should be decommissioned?

Dr. Thomas: That is a matter not for me but for the nuclear installations inspectorate. It is for the NII to decide at what stage a site licence should no longer be given to that station. I suspect that it is not far from making that decision. It is a technical and scientific decision, but it clearly it has environmental implications. I make it clear that I have strongly opposed the Secretary of State's decision to establish an incinerator for low level waste on that site. Although that would deal with material from the site, it would proliferate radioactivity on the site and that is something to which we should object.

To return to the employment implications of the closure which are so relevant to the debate, I hope that when the Minister replies he will say that adequate funds will be made available. My nominated successor, Mr. Llwyd, talked about a figure of £10 million. Whatever the figure is, the Secretary of State should have an appropriate figure in mind for alternative investment. But the form of alternative investment should not be considered as another major construction project. The problem of the diseconomies in Gwynedd for major construction projects has to be tackled. The north-west and mid-Wales economies need a diversity of small and medium-scale enterprises, not a reliance on major construction work. The agency, Antur Dwyryd, whose representatives we shall be meeting tomorrow, has a particular role to play because it is a locally based enterprise agency and is well able to assist small-scale enterprises in the locality to take advantage of whatever funds may be available. The role of the WDA is to be the big partner of those smaller-scale activities. The agency is well capable of doing that and I am pleased that we shall this evening vote more funds for that activity.

8.2 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I should be grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak, but I am not particularly grateful to you for calling me after the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). Every time I listen to one of his speeches I feel obliged for good party political reasons, to find something about which to disagree with him and I find it harder on each successive occasion.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has made one of his fitful appearances in the debate. Fortunately, he is not even doing me the courtesy of listening to what I have to say. It gives me no pleasure to say it, but I regard his allegations against the chairman of the WDA—trivial, footling allegations which have attracted undue publicity—as reflecting no credit on him, damaging to Wales and damaging to the causes in which we all believe.

There has been much play, particularly at the beginning of the debate, about people changing their minds. To my embarrassment, I recall speeches that I made when the WDA was first set up in 1976. I spoke about the unfulfillable expectations that it would arouse. In the end, I was glad to be proved wrong. Because of the policies that have been pursued by successive Conservative Secretaries of State for Wales, we have managed, in many senses, to have the best of both worlds. Beginning with what might be called "Walkerism" and what is now "Huntsmanship", we have had Conservative Secretaries of State who have not hesitated to make use of the limited interventionist role that the WDA can exert. It is, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said, a very different animal from what it was when it was first set up by the Labour Government.

Now that the Government have adopted a middle course, I ask myself whether, were a Labour Government ever to be returned to office, which still seems dubious, they would try to revert to their original concept of the WDA as a picker of winners and a direct player in the economic scene. Above all—this may be an even graver worry—Governments and Government bodies are not very good at picking winners, but they are even worse at trying to save losers.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and I went through a common experience. He was the leader and I merely gave him what support I could in trying to prevent the closure of the steelmaking plant at Shotton. I find it hard to rid myself of the belief that, equipped with an agency such as the WDA, a Labour Government would be unable to resist demands to save jobs at all costs. Yet the hon. Gentleman and I now know perfectly well that the diversification of the Deeside economy has turned out to be pretty nearly an unmixed blessing for the area.

My worry is that, if a Labour Government were to revert to a more directly interventionist role for the WDA, we would soon have demands to save existing jobs at all costs. I know the pressures on any constituency Member of Parliament to fight like a dog for any job that is threatened in his area. One could not blame a Government who gave in to such pressures, but it would be dangerous. It is important, therefore, that we try to remain on the centre ground of a limited role for the WDA which it carries out admirably. How well it carries it out is shown by the jealousy demonstrated on each and every occasion by English Members of Parliament when they ask why they cannot have an English development agency. That seems to suggest something.

I have good reason to be grateful to the WDA and, in particular, to its chairman. I have not had, certainly not in my present constitutency, problems of dereliction or even problems arising from the massive transition from smokestack industries to modern industries with the consequent mass unemployment. But I have had devastation in the form of the Towyn floods, when I had every possible reason to be grateful to the WDA for the way in which it came in and, together with the Secretary of State, assumed leadership in a community which was badly demoralised by the appalling blow that had befallen it.

Had there been no instruments ready to co-ordinate the renewal of economic activity, it would have taken much longer to get that area back on its feet. In the end, as a result of some well-targeted operations by the WDA, in conjuction with local enterprise, the environment in the Towyn area is noticeably better that it was even before the floods. For that, I am grateful to Dr. Gwyn Jones, the WDA and its officers.

However, I have one query about the operation of the agency. I recognise that it is right that it should operate commercially and seek to maximise its returns. I am a little concerned that it is in some cases increasing the rents at a

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

substantially higher rate than that of inflation, thereby conceivably placing in danger the future existence of firms that the agency itself helped to create.

The agency and the use that three successive Secretaries of State for Wales have made of it are just about on the right lines. I reject the Thatcherite-Marxist analysis of society—that only economic forces are determinant of conduct. On the contrary, I believe that there is a role for the individual, and that the individual can turn a situation around. The last two Secretaries of State in particular are conspicuous examples of that. I regard Dr. Gwyn Jones as being very much in the same mould.

I am delighted to support tonight this hotly contested Second Reading and I wish well of the agency and of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the use that he makes of it.

8.10 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): We all strongly support the work of the Welsh Development Agency and generally want it to have more resources and to be ever-more involved in all our areas.

I was asked by the farmers' unions and the prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Pembroke, Mr. Nick Grainger, to make a few remarks about the problems of abattoirs in rural areas. The abattoir at Withybush has invested £40 million in modernisation and now faces a further £250,000 investment to bring it up to European standards by 5 January 1993. Its problems are shared by more than 50 Welsh abattoirs.

Of the 60 abattoirs in Wales, only four meet European standards. According to the Meat and Livestock Commission, only 27 have modernisation plans, and only 14 of those are remotely likely to execute them. If the abattoirs are not licensed by 1993, they will be compelled to close—and there would be far fewer buyers for farmers. The export of live animals would also increase. Already, one half of Welsh lambs are exported live, and that is an unsatisfactory and cruel trade. I cannot understand why the Welsh Development Agency or the Welsh Office cannot help those abattoirs to modernise. That major problem will indirectly hit farmers' incomes, as well as rural employment. It is difficult to find major employers in rural areas, where abattoirs are an important source of jobs.

Wales would be left exporting raw materials, in terms of live lambs and calves, but it would be much better if the livestock was all slaughtered in Wales, then exported. The creation of value-added industries such as meat processing would also be welcome.

In Mid-Wales the Development Board for Rural Wales has unofficially helped the firm in Llanidloes with its £1 million modernisation programme, but I would like the WDA and the Welsh Office to consider broadening that kind of assistance as a matter of urgency. I know that they are lobbied by many other people, but they cannot sit and do nothing while abattoirs go out of business. That would be bad for the rural economy and rural jobs and for farmers' incomes. Surely the WDA should be allowed to become involved as the DBRW is.

As to the agency's more general work, we in Dyfed would like it to be more involved. My area is on the western fringes of Wales, and from Port Talbot and Glamorgan westwards, it is difficult to attract major inward investment. The area also needs more factory buildings.

Dyfed has more than 10 per cent. of the population of Wales and more than 10 per cent. of its unemployment, but in terms of factory buildings, only 5 per cent. of the WDA's resources are invested in Dyfed. That prompted complaints by Dyfed county council's industrial development department, which has time and again exerted pressure on the agency to increase its activity in our part of the world.

Amman valley has particular problems. It is a major unemployment black spot, with many rural communities suffering unemployment of more than 20 per cent. It is over 50 per cent. in the village of Garnant. That is as bad as anywhere in south Wales. Dyfed commissioned, in conjunction with the Welsh Development Agency, a report by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte on unemployment in the Amman and Gwendraeth valleys and what could be done to reduce it. They concluded that there would have to be investment in road links to the M4, particularly to Ammanford and the Amman valley, and an examination of the coal industry.

That matter was commented on by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The Amman and Gwendraeth valleys have 50 million tonnes of high-quality, low-sulphur anthracite, which has a ready, high-value market. However, we do not want that anthracite to be extracted by opencast mining.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Regional selective assistance is available for mining ventures, if they meet the RSA criteria. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in September such assistance for Anglesey Mining, with the creation of 147 jobs. As part of the package for small firms that we announced in August, RSA was extended to Pentre colliery for the exploitation of coal reserves. Regional selective assistance is available, provided that the criteria are met.

Mr. Williams: I am pleased to hear those comments, but I had in mind something much broader. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli has frequently said that west Wales would like British Coal to establish a small mines company. As British Coal will not do so, will the WDA consider our 50 million tonnes of anthracite and develop environmentally acceptable ways of exploiting and developing those resources, which would be proactive in that the industry could create jobs for a few thousand people?

The Capel Hendre industrial estate is just two miles from the end of the M4, so it is ideally located for major industrial development. The borough of Dinefwr, which is responsible for Amman valley, is placing great store by developments that could be attracted to that site. I was delighted to see Dinefwr develop last year, in partnership with the Welsh Development Agency, a £3·8 million project. We badly need a major internal investor. The Amman valley has lost nearly 2,000 jobs over the past two or three years, at Abernant and Betws. Those jobs must be replaced, and I hope that Capel Hendre, with 50 per cent. involvement by the WDA, will help to create the employment that the area so desperately needs.

8.19 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I apologise for my absence at the beginning of the debate; I was serving on the Standing Committee considering the Competition and Service (Utilities) Bill.

For all its limitations, some of which have been identified in the debate, the WDA has been a success story—a story begun by the Labour party in 1975, and continued by successive Conservative Secretaries of State since 1979. I pay tribute to those Secretaries of State, who include the current Secretary of State for Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) referred to rumours of a hidden agenda to dismember the WDA and hive off, at the least, its property sales activities. I hope that those rumours do not prove correct, since such action would be folly indeed. The Scots, for example, are deeply envious of the WDA, and would like a similarly enterprising agency of their own.

In many respects, the agency has, through its success, defied the laws of Thatcherism. It has certainly defied the laws of the No Turning Back group, of which the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), is still a member. As the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), to whose speech I listened with interest, pointed out, the agency has undertaken the public sector pump priming of the Welsh economy that has been so crucial in the 12 bitter years since 1979.

That pump priming has been especially important following the cuts in regional aid that have taken effect over the past few years. No doubt the Minister will recall the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd by the Secretary of State on Tuesday 26 November about the regional aid cuts in the valleys programme area. Such significant cuts should be properly explained.

Regional development grant, which is especially important to the valley areas, has been cut from £17·2 million in 1988-89 to a derisory £6·9 million. Cuts have also been made in regional selective assistance. The overall cuts in regional aid have been astonishing; it has been cut from £28·9 million in 1988-89 to barely £14·5 million in 1990-91. In just two years, regional aid has been halved, and compensation in the form of regional support elsewhere does not appear to have been provided. The regional enterprise grants introduced two years ago have hardly managed to creep up from a small £0·1 million to a—still small—£0·5 million. I hope that the Minister will explain how he proposes to fill the gap in regional assistance to the valley areas.

Let me now say a little about my constituency, Neath. As I have told the WDA's chairman, Dr. Gwyn Jones, if I have a criticism of the agency, it concerns the lack of inward investment in Neath. There has been plenty elsewhere in south Wales, especially around the M4 corridor, and I pay tribute to the agency for that, but, as the agency has conceded, there has been none recently in Neath. The WDA's property development programme for 1991-92, of which I have a copy, does not mention Neath; it makes no reference to property sales or property development portfolios held by the agency there. I trust that this will be the last year in which Neath is omitted. I know that representations have been made to the WDA, not only by me but by Neath borough council.

My constituency—not just the Neath valley, but the Swansea valley and the part of the Amman valley that falls within it—desperately needs inward investment. For that reason, I invited Dr. Gwyn Jones to visit the constituency on 11 September. I escorted him around a series of prime industrial sites in Cadoxton, Blaenant, Aberpurgwm and other parts of the Neath valley that are crying out for inward investment, and have traditionally enjoyed the benefits of enterprising industrial activity.

Whatever other areas the WDA chairman may have visited over the past few months, he can have encountered no more exotic venues than those to be found in the Dulais and Neath valleys,—places such as Banwen, Crynant, Resolven and Glynneath. Those areas are very attractive in terms of inward investment, and I hope that, when the chairman considers what his visit has achieved, he will decide to ensure that my constituency receives the investment to which it is entitled.

There is, however, a problem of access to the Neath valley, in particular, because of the missing link on the A465, which has been neglected for more than 15 years. I know that the Secretary of State is aware of that, and I am grateful for the way in which, since the summer—when we discussed the matter—he has hurried through some of the planning issues, and hastened the day when work will begin on building the road up the Neath valley and thus creating an artery that will attract inward investment. The people of Neath very much appreciate the way in which he has cleared away many of the planning obstacles.

Nevertheless, I was disappointed that the Minister of State's announcement yesterday to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs apparently did not include the A465 missing link in the programme of new roads for Wales in 1992-93. I understand that £195 million is to be spent next year in the programme, and it is worrying that the missing link has not been included.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am speaking without my notes, but I believe that I said yesterday that we would be involved in the start of work on that section of the A465.

Mr. Hain: If that is so, I am delighted. I hope that the Minister will be able to confirm that; as a Welsh speaker, he will know that the Eisteddfod is coming to Neath in 1994. It will be held just below Glynneath. If the missing link is in place by then, it will make an enormous difference to the event, and to the prosperity of the valley.

The agency's dynamism is also needed in respect of coal production and investment: that is equally important to my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd made many important points in that regard. I understand that the Welsh Office is now studying a very exciting investment initiative, and I hope that the Minister can give me some assurances about it.

Ryan Mining International has presented an investment proposition. It wishes to establish a new project in the vale of Neath, which will bring at least 600 direct jobs to the area, and many more indirect jobs. The project involves £18 million-worth of investment; it will be environmentally sensitive and very attractive generally. It will hide much of the infrastructure that surrounds mining areas, landscaping it behind environmentally attractive "curtains".

Above all, it will ensure that the heavy lorry traffic that passes through our valleys is taken off the roads and transferred to the railways by reopening the Vale of Neath railway link and taking the coal straight from the Pentreclwydau line—which it is proposed to reopen—

[Mr. Hain]

alongside Ryan's existing mines at Rheola, Lyn and Venallt. The coal from that attractive integrated mining project will be taken down the Vale of Neath railway directly to Cardiff docks or conceivably to Aberthaw power station.

Ryans has applied to the Welsh Office for a grant of 80 per cent. of the £6·7 million that it will cost to create the infrastructure. That excludes reopening Pentreclwydau pit, which it will finance. I hope that the Welsh Office will look favourably on its application for £5·3 million, which, I understand, meets all the Welsh Office's criteria.

The Neath valley and the surrounding valleys have some of the finest anthracite in the world. It is clean and has a low sulphur content, and its abstraction would be of enormous benefit not only to my constituents and the local community but the south Wales economy.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd that Ryan has shown more imagination and dynamism than British Coal in the past few years. British Coal has seemed almost enthusiastic about closing every south Wales pit, and the last pit in the Neath constituency —Blaenant—closed last July. It is significant that Ryans made a bid to keep the pit open, but, despite the fact that it would get a fat profit from it, British Coal refused. I can only conclude that British Coal does not want competition to show up its traditional inadequacies and failure to provide a future for coal mining, particularly an industry that is environmentallly sensitive and that respects local communities, as the Vale of Neath project will.

Valleys such as Neath—my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) made this point well earlier—need a distinctive strategy. It is not sufficient to treat the south Wales economy as though it were simply the M4 corridor and, welcome though it is, to congregate inward investment around the motorway. The valley areas must not be regarded as commuter areas for new plants and manufacturing companies. Although it is a rather fanciful notion in view of the class base of the valley, I have heard it argued seriously that the valleys could be yuppified and become commuter belts for the M4 corridor.

That is not a serious strategy for the valley communities. The WDA and the Welsh Office must devise a distinctive economic strategy for them. After all, they are attrative areas, yet their traditional skills are wasting away. They are environmentally ettractive, particularly for modern high-technology manufacturing investment. Experience in Europe and America shows that such investment often is attracted to rural sites that offer an environmentally sensitive location.

The valleys communities have a history of industrial activity that is waiting to be taken forward into the next century. I hope that the WDA will look at the success of areas such as Baden-Wurttemberg in West Germany, where public sector initiatives and the power of government and public intervention work in partnership with the private sector to provide roads, education, housing and the local environment and all its facilities and the skills and research for technology transfer to achieve the skills base that is necessary to attract manufacturing investment.

The WDA must provide grant aid or allowances to ensure that we keep the Welsh economy to the fore not only of the British economy but of the new emerging European economy. We need capital allowances to assist with manufacturing investment in the valleys.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I was surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say, if I understood him properly, that there was no WDA involvement in his constituency. I have a list of 26 WDA investments in Neath, worth £884,000. Furthermore, we are well aware of the Ryan Mining International project.

Mr. Hain: I am glad that the Minister is well aware of Ryan's application, and I hope that he speeds it through the processes of the Welsh Office. The right hon. Gentleman misunderstood me—I do not blame him for that—because I specifically said that there had been no inward investment. I freely acknowledge that there has been plenty of WDA activity, for which I am grateful, but no inward investment from foreign companies such as we have seen elsewhere in south Wales. Moreover, the property development programme does not refer to Neath, despite the fact that it has many ideal sites that the WDA either owns or could develop.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My understanding is that since April 1983, Welsh Development International, which was previously WINvest, has secured eight projects generating £22·64 million worth of investment in the Neath area. But I shall look into it further.

Mr. Hain: I hope that the Minister of State will look into it further. He will find, as the chairman of the WDA conceded, that there has been no major inward investment in recent years, although I acknowledge that it has come in bits and bobs over the years. That issue must be addressed.

Ryan's application is a welcome and exciting attempt to use the potential that still exists for coal extraction in the coal valleys and elsewhere in the valleys, but we are entering into what I would describe as a post-mining culture and need a distinctive economic agenda as we proceed into a new century. The Welsh Office does not show sufficient understanding of the need for that new agenda, but the gap must be filled urgently. I hope that the WDA will consider that and the future of the top of the valleys, which are often neglected and are decaying. They need sensitive investment to ensure that they have a future in their own right and do not simply become commuter belts for elsewhere.

8.38 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): This has been a good and constructive debate. It has been one of those rare and valuable debates when several of my hon. Friends and a number of Conservative Members have made positive and thoughtful speeches. I refer particularly to the hon. Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), of whom it is characteristic, and for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), who described himself as slightly demob happy today. The one jarring note came from the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) who, I regret, was both churlish and smug in his contribution. It was sad to have that approach brought to the debate in that it illustrated the way in which some Conservatives appear increasingly shrill and divisive. All that we heard from the hon. Gentleman was cheap nonsense—he made no positive contribution to the debate. We heard of his experience on parliamentary missions abroad—I must say that if he

believes that two days in Tahiti is equivalent to a coffee break, I hope that that does not say anything the way in which he approaches his working day. His contribution was an exception to the nature and tone of the debate.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I was slightly puzzled by the equivalence between the hotel in Tahiti and the Membury service station. Clearly, there has been a marked rise in the standards at the Membury service station since I was last there. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Michael: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman shares the puzzlement of my colleagues about that contribution.

I want to pick up some comments and contributions but, first, I pay tribute to the Labour Members of Parliament and Ministers who made the debate possible. We recognise the value of the Welsh Development Agency and welcome the fact that that is not a point of contention although it must be remembered that it was established by a Labour Government and that the Conservative party opposed it. That experience is repeated elsewhere—it is something of a tradition for the Conservative party to oppose and criticise efforts to encourage enterprise. I had the same experience when I and others—including councillor Paddy Kitson and people such as Arthur Gilbert and David Davies from the private sector—planned the establishment of Cardiff and Vale Enterprise. It has since been a great success and is now supported by the Conservative party and, indeed, by Ministers.

Sir Wyn Roberts *indicated dissent*

Mr. Michael: The Minister seeks to cast doubt on that, but I assure him that it was opposed most vigorously by the Conservative party on Cardiff city council, not by Conservatives in the Welsh Office. It was good that, at the end of the day, the Conservatives in Cardiff came to recognise the value of the organisation and to support it.

A little anger is sometimes caused when the Conservatives claim to be the party of business because in recent years it has pursued economic policies that have damaged industry and business. That neglect of economic policies has undermined the manufacturing industry in particular. Above all, it has done enormous damage to small local and family businesses in Wales. There was an example of that yesterday—I refer to the Government's decision not to pursue large businesses that break the law which gave a terrible example of unfairness. Firms which want to obey and observe the law as it has been passed in Parliament are being squeezed and pressed, in order to maintain their market share, to follow those which have less respect for the law. There is also pressure on employees as a result of that.

I set the context against which the WDA undertakes its work by the mention of legality. I must also say that the work of the police and the increasing crime in Wales is a considerable problem for business. There has been an increase of about 22 per cent. in crime in the south Wales police area, and I was absolutely appalled to learn today that the Government's decision to increase policing in some forces includes not one additional policeman in answer to the modest request for 44 by the south Wales police. That is an appalling decision, especially when one increasingly finds—as I am sure my right hon. and hon. Friends do—that business men are concerned about break-ins and problems that must be dealt with in their communities. There has been a scandalous undermining of the situation, and the decision will not help businesses in Wales any more than it will help the law-abiding communities in every part of Wales.

Against the background of the WDA's work one must consider the Government's failure to ensure that all European money is brought in that is available to help the economy of south Wales. I think the estimate that has been given is of about £100 million in regard to RECHAR. A number of my hon. Friends have commented on that. There is much concern about the fact that Wales is not obtaining assistance from Europe which should be available to it and about the withholding of RECHAR assistance for mining areas and of other forms of assistance.

It is not only the valleys that lose out. We must consider the levels of unemployment in our cities and urban areas. Cardiff, Central's unemployment rate of 15·1 per cent. is the highest of any Welsh constituency. The chairman of the city council's economic development committee—Councillor Jon Jones—has drawn attention to that fact as something which

"will be sure to shock people."

It has certainly shocked us to discover that that was the situation, especially when one recognises that the constituency with the second worse unemployment is Cardiff, West with a rate of 13·2 per cent. Cardiff, South and Penarth registers eighth place in the worst in Wales table.

One of the problems with which I hope the Minister will deal in his response is that the work of different agencies —including the WDA, local authorities and everyone else —will be undermined if assistance from Europe is taken away. There is a danger that Cardiff will not be regarded as an area in severe need of assistance—which it certainly is—and that it may miss out when the Commission and the European Parliament undertake their review of current assistance areas. The European regional development fund under Objective II provides funding to areas in industrial decline for improvement to their infrastructure. Traditionally, selected areas of Cardiff have benefited from that scheme and our worry is that the major review of funding announced earlier this year may lead to a redrawing of the map and to assistance to Cardiff being cut in favour of other parts of Europe. For that to happen, when the figures show all too clearly the dire need in central Cardiff for more investment in business and jobs, would be to undermine the situation and would be greatly to the detriment of the work undertaken by the WDA and others.

One must underline the levels of unemployment that have to be tackled in Wales: Swansea, West has an unemployment rate of more than 13 per cent.; Ynys Môn and Rhondda more than 12 per cent; Cynon Valley, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, Torfaen and Newport, West are well over the 11 per cent. mark. Unemployment is still a major problem to be tackled. In recognising the efforts made locally and by the WDA, it would be unwise not to stress the continuing major problems experienced by communities throughout Wales.

Some of my hon. Friends and, indeed, the hon. Member for Delyn referred to the railway system. We desperately need a link to the channel tunnel but, at the moment, we are about to see the ending of the last train from Paddington to south Wales which has particular relevance tonight for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). We need a later train up to London from

[Mr. Michael]

south Wales, which would encourage the entertainment business and the tourist industry in south Wales. We need a rail link to Cardiff Wales airport, similarly for the benefit of economic development in the whole region. That idea has been pursued with vigour by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) but it is relevant for the wider region of south Wales. The lack of spending on the infrastructure—especially on rail—when our European competitors who are much closer to the heart of Europe are galloping away from us and making such investment is of great concern.

One of the most important factors for businesses—both new and expanding, whether inward or home grown industries—is the importance of good advice. In that respect, the work of the WDA in conjunction with local agencies is very important. Recently, we have witnessed a massive increase in the number of European grant consultancy firms who suggest that significant grants are available from the European Commission. Usually for a fixed fee of several hundred pounds, the consultancy undertakes to find grants for which a business is eligible and a money-back guarantee is often offered. The information often provided by some of the firms is generally available free of charge from a number of official organisations, including the EC office in Wales, the Welsh Office exports branch, larger enterprise agencies, the Wales Euro Information Centre and the European Business Centre in Cardiff as well as through the advisory work of the WDA. It is not uncommon or unreasonable to charge for research services undertaken on a client's behalf, but the businesses concerned often develop unrealistic expectations of their chances of obtaining grant aid and can be disappointed by their subsequent failure to obtain grant moneys. I have been told of one company, now in liquidation I believe, which, not only provided irrelevant information, but defaulted on repaying the initial fee charged, despite offering a money-back, no-risk guarantee.

That is a worrying activity. The question of such consultancies has been raised in the European Parliament in Strasbourg by the Member of the European Parliament for south Wales, Mr. Wayne David. I ask the Minister of State to note the concern, and to agree that what is needed is a partnership between bodies such as the Welsh Office and the WDA, and local authorities and local enterprise agencies, to provide a one-stop shop which would make such advice available. Then people could be certain that they were getting neutral, objective advice, and being told the hard truth as well as the encouraging possibilities. There should be a partnership among bodies with expertise in Wales to provide such information. This is not an area in which the opening up of competition is helpful.

We must consider the work of local authorities in Wales. I was rather sad that although the Secretary of State gave credit to the Welsh work force—and then to himself and to the WDA—he failed to put the local authorities at the top of his list of bodies deserving considerable credit for success in finding inward investment. Bosch, Japanese investment, and organisations such as the Chemical Bank, British Airways and a number of others have come to south Wales because of the hard work of local authorities, which often takes place behind the scenes and is in partnership with the WDA and the Government.

The Minister will note that I mention the Welsh Office specifically. It would come better from Ministers to speak of the achievements of the Welsh Office and the WDA if they gave the same credit to the local authorities in south Wales that those authorities give to the help that they receive from bodies such as the WDA. I hope that the Minister will respond generously on that subject.

Credit should also be given to the Wales TUC. As I said in an intervention, I was sad at some of the comments made earlier about that body. Like local authorities, the Wales TUC has recognised that the real key to success in that area is partnership, and every report from organisations such as Cardiff and Vale Enterprise, of which I remain a director, gives credit to the co-operation of the WDA and refers, often in fulsome terms, to Welsh Office money or money from the European Commission. Local authorities, enterprise agencies and others work, too, with bodies established by the Government in Wales, including even the development corporation. I underline the role of the local authorities, for example, in the redevelopment of central Cardiff, where partnership with the private sector was so important.

We must recognise the initiatives that can be taken by local organisations. Against that background we need to consider the way in which the WDA should be working to strengthen the Welsh economy. There has been much discussion recently of procedures and processes, and there has been criticism of the way in which the WDA has done certain things. Those matters should be investigated and the systems must be put straight. The people at the head of the WDA must recognise that they are not operating in a private company. Public money is involved, so the standards of care and accountability required in public life must be observed at every stage. We also need stability within the WDA. There is some concern that the many changes in recent years may have led to an element of instability in decision making.

Those are serious points, but it is also important that we do not weaken the agency's credibility both inside and outside Wales. The best way to strengthen that is for the agency to be open to criticism, ready to put its house in order and to discuss the way forward with everyone else concerned. Monitoring techniques in job creation have always been difficult. Monitoring is not easy and needs care. We worked very hard on deciding which method to use in Cardiff and Vale Enterprise, and came to the conclusion that we should always attribute the minimum to the work of the agency and credit the maximum to other agencies involved in any partnership work. That gives credibility and authority to the figures released. I suppose that I am recommending what might be described as a conservative estimate—although nowadays it would be odd to use that expression, because modesty does not appear to be part of the job description for Secretaries of State in this Administration.

Part of the problem was caused by pressure from the Secretary of State's predecessor and others for high figures that could be trumpeted in presenting the achievements of the WDA. What is needed is a more sober and reasonable assessment of what is being achieved and targeted.

In recent pronouncements we have heard described four objectives of the WDA. The first is to attract new inward investment. That is all right but, to expand on the idea, we need to target that inward investment and to take a realistic look at the potential of different forms of inward

investment for building the economy rather than simply considering the raw numbers of jobs created in the first days following the investment.

The objective is to work with existing businesses in Wales to promote economic development. I hope that that would include working with such businesses to help them expand and to encourage their activities, not simply seeking to involve them in the economic development of the area. More must be done to help our own indigenous businesses.

The third objective was to generate environmental improvements by land reclamation, and the fourth was to promote economic development in rural and urban areas. The debate shows that there are many good ideas around, and many positive contributions that could be made if the partnership and decision making is taken to a local level.

I pay tribute to the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who has ministerial experience in such matters, my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), who brings a fresh approach to the problems of his valley, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who made a cogent contribution early in the debate. Each of them described the creativity in their communities in the valleys, which could be harnessed to develop the local economies. They were examining real needs, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), who spoke of the importance of abattoirs to the rural economy. My first experience in local authority was to be put on the abattoir committee in Cardiff in 1973. I do not envy anybody who has to tackle that activity, whether at the practical or at the economic level. My hon. Friend is right to stress its importance and I hope that we shall have a positive response from the Minister.

I hope that the WDA will listen to my hon. Friends' points and will accept that there is a need to be adventurous and imaginative, while also being rooted in the communities for which my colleagues have spoken.

I especially enjoyed the thought-provoking and imaginative speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The Minister may agree that my hon. Friend showed an ability to think laterally, which is what we need to tackle the enormous problems that we face in Wales. He was very much to the point in his comments on training funds. I am not sure that I agree with him on the idea of hiving off the land and property of the WDA. There is much to be said for a one-stop shop in these matters and there is much to be said for the body that is responsible for job creation looking at the various job creation factors in relation to property and to the development of land rather than looking at matters only from the point of view of letting. The criticism might be that the WDA has been pushed too far by Government policy into looking too commercially at its lettings rather than looking at developing the job creation potential in its decision making. We come together on the target and the argument needs to be pursued in considering how we develop the work of the WDA.

We need to consider a number of points about inward investment. The figures to which I referred have caused problems because recent audit reports suggest that the WDA claims a high proportion of inward investment, and that it includes moves from England and expansion in plants that were once inward investment. There is a need to examine objectively the validity of the figures, not as matters of debate or point scoring, but to enable us to be precise about the facts with which we are dealing in our debates.

We keep hearing that there is a big push on at the Welsh Office to create links with the European motor regions, such as Baden-Württemberg, Catáluña, Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy, to which several hon. Members have referred. We need more information about the pay-back so far and about the quantifiable measures that will judge the success of those policies. We are not talking about a background of specific objectives. I remind the Minister that the contacts with the motor regions build very much on links forged by south Wales local authorities over many years. The investment in time by local authorities, especially in the case of Baden-Württemberg, has made it possible to look at the policy from the Welsh Office point of view.

The opening of a European office is to be welcomed, although we need to know about the mechanisms for disseminating the benefits back in Wales. How will that relate to the European activities of other organisations, such as the local authorities that make use of European funds?

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that, by 1988, 75 per cent. of Japan's overseas investment was in non-manufacturing activities. What is being done to attract that market to Wales? What analysis is the WDA making of the potential there? Targeting is an important part of the question. I suggest that it is not just a numbers game of how many jobs can be attracted. We need to look at the areas of real potential because there is a danger of missing opportunities.

One example is the supply of parts and materials to incoming industries. We should consider the mistakes made in the United States and elsewhere. The Minister may be aware that in America imports, accounting for almost 30 per cent. of the United States car market, along with cars produced by United States based transplants, have swallowed more than half the American car market. The United States autoparts trade deficit with Japan is heading up to $12 billion from $3 billion five years ago. According to one study, it would hit $22 billion by 1994. That is relevant to Wales. In some cases, our indigenous industries find difficulty in getting a fair share of supplying the industries that have come in. That is important with the industries that have come in with the declared policy of encouraging local suppliers. Bosch and some of the Japanese industries have come in with that stated aim.

The problem that has been experienced in America is that, over time, those doors close. The opportunity may be there for a period, but it needs to be seized. If it is not seized, it may disappear. A University of Michigan study of the supplying of one Honda transplant found that 38 per cent. of the components had been manufactured in Japan, 46 per cent. by Japanese transplant suppliers and 16 per cent. by United States suppliers. The Americans are protesting about that.

It would be silly to moan and blame Japanese companies or the incoming Bosch firms. We need partnerships to be formed in Wales and for the WDA to work positively to help our own companies, and to help the creation of home-grown industries where necessary, in order to seize the opportunity. That must be done with a positive approach. It will not just happen accidentally, and it should not be taken for granted. We need to concentrate on supply and secondary manufacture in partnership in that way. One of my worries is that there seems to be a

[Mr. Michael]

broad-brush approach from the WDA about its intentions and hopes. We need to see some of those things brought down to very specific intentions which are agreed and developed in partnership, and very specifically, with local authorities, enterprise agencies and others.

Another point is the need for the WDA to respond to change. The problems of the recession have perhaps not been met sufficiently. There was a little bit of an exchange about advance factories. Some Conservative Members were dismissive of the contribution that was made. However, is it right that the WDA should still concentrate on building bespoke factories? I understand the argument that advance factories frighten off the private sector, but the private sector is not building at the moment, certainly in many areas of Wales. Is not this just the time when the WDA should be flexible enough to step up advance factory programmes, in a property slump, and enable Wales to be prepared and ready to take whatever opportunities are available?

The Secretary of State made a passing mention of indigenous companies. That is where I want to concentrate the emphasis. We have seen in Wales over the years a loss of headquarters companies. We have seen the importance of headquarters companies which are in Wales. In particular, I pay tribute to ASW—Allied Steel and Wire—in my constituency. It is an excellent company which works with the community, not to advertise itself or ingratiate itself but because it sees itself as an integral part of that community. It sees itself as a part not only of the business community but of the whole community in Cardiff, and indeed of a wider area of south Wales. Its approach to the recession was shown by the way in which the chairman and top management took a cut as they saw the recession coming on. That showed the way in which they wanted to make sure that the business prospered and was able to cope with the recession. That is in contrast, for instance, with organisations such as Welsh Water, which did not approach the onset of the recession in the same way.

There is a need for concentration on our indigenous companies. There is a need for the WDA to move decision making to a more local level so that partnerships with local authorities, private companies, chambers of commerce and so on can be made more fruitful and effective. We hear too much about the headquarters and international aspects of the WDA and not enough about the local work of the WDA, which, of course, is the aspect on which virtually every one of my hon. Friends concentrated.

The next point is the importance of training and enterprise education. Even supporters of the idea of establishing TECs feel that they are not moving quickly enough. We recognised the problem that they faced immediately they were established—that is, immediate cuts in their finances—but we need skills, we need the skills audit to be developed, and we need a partnership between different aspects of government, local and national, to tackle that serious difficulty. We need also to support start-ups. That matter has gone off the agenda in recent times, although many of us have spent much time on it and the Minister of State's predecessor took a leading role in some of the discussions about seven or eight years ago. We need to remind ourselves of the importance of this matter and the significant contribution that it has made to creating new jobs in Wales in recent years. That is something that can happen only at a local level.

I have something of a reservation about the report "Skills and Enterprise: An Agenda for Wales" that was published the other day. It seems to suggest a worrying transfer of influence, which could turn into a power, to the WDA. That is all the more worrying when local authorities are sometimes unwilling to take a stand on justifiable issues because they fear that, if they stand up to the WDA on one issue, that might jeopardise their joint working on another venture. To see the WDA extending its influence into training makes one feel that it is tending to become a mini Welsh Office. Perhaps the Minister of State should look out for his job if the WDA further extends its role.

That report makes scant mention of the role of the local authorities, which still have a big part to play in training, and which will have a residual role even if the Government go ahead with their crazy idea of removing colleges from local authority control. Local voluntary organisations, such as the Women Workshop, compacts and in-house company training provide training opportunities in various parts of Wales.

The report also leaves one with little confidence that anything other than lip service is being paid to the needs of unemployed and disadvantaged people. That matter should have been one of the major headings rather than the subject of passing references on, I believe, page 13 and in the appendix.

Not enough is being done at the moment to provide employment and training for adults with learning difficulties. I have been involved with the work of the computer workshop in Colleg Glan Hafren where we have seen the way in which a real contribution to employment can be made if proper training and opportunities are offered.

I pay tribute to South Glamorgan county council for recognising the need to establish training places to enable people to work on from their placement to a real job from which, in the longer term, they can find permanent employment with the local authority. We need such a means of moving people from a placement into full employment. I recognise that that is not an easy thing to manage and it needs considerably greater encouragement than it is given at the moment.

I was sad to find that one organisation which deals with adults with learning difficulties in my constituency had been left high and dry by the company that was its contracted trainer. Although there was no longer any contract to provide training, the managers and the trainees at Track 2000 in Splott continue to attend voluntarily—the trainees do not receive their training allowance—and the social services are still referring adults with learning difficulties to that organisation although it had fallen off the agenda locally.

I ask the Minister of State to take note of that example and to find the best possible way of ensuring that, in the present economic difficulties, people with disabilities of all descriptions do not get lost once again, as has happened all too often in the past. We must remind ourselves of the importance of creating a training opportunity for people with disabilities. That is why I ask the Minister of State, in his response, to agree that he will look specifically at that point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): As the House knows, debates can range widely on Second Reading, but the hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Michael: I take your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I referred to those points because the document that was published this week referred to an increased training role for the Welsh Development Agency, especially in relation to those aspects of training.

It is important that training is developed in partnership and that the WDA recognises the role of other bodies and does not take on too strong a role for itself in developing employment training initiatives.

The WDA recently stated that over 400 of the factory units that it owns in Wales are currently unoccupied. While that is undoubtedly a sign of the depth of the recession in Wales, the Government should ensure that every effort is made by the agency to let those properties and get people into work.

The work of the WDA cannot be viewed in isolation from the general economic climate and the way in which it affects the Welsh economy. In the past year, unemployment in Wales has risen by more than 37 per cent. Business failures have risen by almost 90 per cent. Average earnings in Wales are lower than in any other region of Britain, with 40 per cent. of adult full-time employees earning less than £2 per hour.

A Labour Government would work with the WDA to create a climate which would enable business to prosper in Wales. We shall give serious consideration to making available new sources of investment and finance for growing Welsh firms. As my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said, we must tackle the skills shortages that prevent many Welsh companies from expanding. In consultation with the WDA and higher education institutions, we shall investigate the establishment of Welsh technology trusts to work with small businesses to improve the quality of technology transfer and access to it.

Growth, common sense and, above all, partnership are the qualities that a Labour Government will bring to Wales and to the work of the WDA in Wales and for Wales. Business in Wales, like the people of Wales, needs that day to come quickly.

9.15 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): We have had a thoughtful and therefore helpful debate. Seldom have I found myself more in sympathy, if not in agreement, with the views expressed by Opposition Members, especially when it seemed that they were edging towards coal privatisation. Perhaps the prospect of an election concentrates the minds of hon. Gentlemen. However, I must not be too provocative. It is abundantly clear from what has been said that there is widespread approval for the work of the Welsh Development Agency and for giving it adequate resources to carry out its task.

The WDA has played a full and vigorous part in transforming the outlook for the Welsh economy, but, of course, much remains to be done. Through its wide range of services, including the provision of modern industrial floor space, the supply of financial and technological advice and the attraction of inward investment, the WDA has done much to help bring about the transformation that we have witnessed in Wales. But the agency is not standing still. Increasingly, its emphasis is on becoming a catalyst, a facilitator and a pump primer to stimulate private sector enterprise and investment.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 and the origins of the agency. In an intervention, I mentioned the change that we wrought on that body in 1980. The Government have indeed given the WDA an expanding role and a new dynamism. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and others would like to be reminded of some of the facts. The current budget of £160 million is an all-time high in both cash and real terms. As we heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, next year's budget will be even higher, at £166·75 million. We are spending more in cash terms on the WDA in one year than was spent during the whole of its time under Labour between 1976 and 1979. We have spent more on factories than the Labour party did. We are spending more on clearing derelict land. The average allocation under this Government for land reclamation is 30 per cent. higher than under the previous Labour Administration.

Mr. Rowlands: I am sure that the Minister will deal with the facts of the budget in a moment, but I wish to ask a specific question. The figure of £166 million was announced in the autumn statement. What is the net contribution of the Welsh Office to the £166 million for next year?

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is about £76 million. I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point in a moment.

One of the first things that we did when we took office was to introduce the Industry Act 1980, in which we gave the WDA the more catalytic role of stimulating private sector investment by encouraging private sector ownership of factories. That was important, because it was the only real way to achieve sustained high growth and prosperity. The attraction is that it gives the companies a real stake in Wales. The agency has succeeded in bringing more private money into Wales. For example, last year, for every pound that it spent on joint property ventures, it was successful in attracting more than £4 of private investment.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) rightly referred to our Command Paper 1516 on Government expenditure in Wales. I draw his attention to paragraph 5.21:

> "Net grant in aid will decline significantly over the 3 years (from £87 million to £62 million), with the balance being made up from increased receipts."

I give him an assurance that, in setting sales targets, we take into account economic factors and the state of the property market in the year in question.

Mr. Rowlands: Is that all?

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is more that I could say, but I can certainly go no further in substance.

Mr. Rowlands: I am only teasing the right hon. Gentleman. We are trying to check the plausibility of that investment. That Command Paper assumed that the 1991 forecast of the factory sales would be 74,000 sq ft. Originally it was intended to be 209,000. We should have an idea what that figure is now likely to be. The figure for next year is 260,000. In terms of factory sales, how feasible are those figures?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made an announcement. I have told the hon. Gentleman the proportion by way of net Government contribution. We anticipate that we can achieve the rest of the difference between net grant in aid and the gross. We shall make up the balance with increased receipts.

Mr. Rowlands: What will happen if that does not happen?

Sir Wyn Roberts: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, I can only refer to our record, which, in terms of expenditure by the WDA, has been very good indeed.

In 1983, we set up WINvest, now Welsh Development International, to provide a sharper focus for the drive to get more overseas companies to choose Wales as a base. To date, we have had remarkable results. Last year, 147 projects were won, which will generate about £585 million of capital investment and are projected to create or safeguard about 15,000 jobs. We have also provided for the increased presence of the WDA abroad. Offices have now been opened in Canada, Taiwan and Korea, and an office in Germany is planned for next year. Offices were already placed in the United States and Japan before 1979.

Until the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke, it seemed that Opposition Members wanted to extend the range of the WDA's responsibilities still further, especially in training. Hon. Members will know that a transfer of the responsibility for training in Wales has been approved by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. From 1 April 1992, it will rest with the Welsh Office and not the Department of Employment.

The assumption of responsibility for training gives us a great opportunity to capitalise on what we have achieved to date with the establishment of TECs, in economic development and in our education reforms. Training will sit alongside enterprise and education in the Welsh Office. My right hon. Friend has set up a special unit at senior level to co-ordinate policies and activities across Wales. As a first step, he has issued strategic guidance to the TECs, setting an agenda for Wales within the national priority areas. Naturally, inward investment features prominently in that strategy.

In addition, if the Further and Higher Education Bill becomes law, we shall have further and higher education funding councils for Wales. Again, that will be the direct responsibility of the Welsh Office. Therefore, the whole of education and training at almost all levels will be beneath the umbrella of the Secretary of State at the Welsh Office.

Much earlier, the National Audit Office report was referred to. I wish to clarify a point about grants. The main form of grant, regional selective assistance, is indeed paid in relation to the number of jobs created, but it is important to realise that these grants are normally paid in stages over a period of time as projects develop. Naturally, a company's plans sometimes change, and the number of jobs originally foreseen at the time of the company's announcement changes. Sometimes job numbers increase but, it is true, sometimes they fall. If they fall, the amount of grant payable can also be reduced. There is also provision for grant to be recovered in certain circumstances if the project does not proceed as anticipated.

The WDA is active in urban development. It is vital to reinforce and strengthen local economies, particularly in the urban areas of Wales, which may have suffered as a result of the rundown of traditional industry. The WDA recognises that, and has set itself the job of bringing about urban regeneration and development to create an attractive environment for working and living. The involvement of the private sector is desirable in all that. The agency's role is essentially to act as a catalyst and co-ordinator.

My right hon. Friend referred to the general policy and the priority now attached to this work. Resources are being focused and targeted on specific towns or areas where there is both need and the potential for improvement. Under that programme in 1991-92, the agency plans to spend a record £12 million in some 28 towns or areas throughout Wales.

The agency cannot act alone, and partnerships or joint ventures with both the private and public sectors are often formed to take projects forward. I should like to mention some specific examples. The problems of Holyhead are well known, particularly to the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Jones) and me. The solution requires a combined, co-ordinated and targeted effort. The WDA has been joined by Ynys Mon borough council, Gwynedd county council, Sealink Stena, Holyhead opportunities trust and Holyhead town council to form the Holyhead urban joint venture. Some £5·6 million has been announced to regenerate the town. That involves the relocation of the port operations, the redevelopment of the west dock to provide major tourist attractions; developing land and the provision of premises for industrial investment. It also involves a marina, general environmental improvements and pedestrianisation works. There will also be a housing renewal area.

I should also like to mention the Cynon valley, where the borough council—again, a local authority—and the WDA have joined in a major plan to revive the valley's environment, prosperity and prospects. The plan, which will involve substantial private sector resources, will involve expenditure totalling some £18 million over the next few years. There will be substantial development of land for industrial purposes and major infrastructure work, including highway improvements. The town centres of Aberdare and Mountain Ash will also be the subject of a programme of commercial improvements. Major environmental and land reclamation works are also scheduled, which is particularly important for sites such as that occupied by the former phurnacite plant.

However, the plan cannot be achieved by physical works alone, and the improvement of training facilities is also included, along with substantial marketing campaigns, to attract new investment. I look forward to seeing the plan developing on the ground.

Further west, in Llanelli, the WDA is also involved in major proposals to regenerate the south Llanelli coastal area. The agency plans to invest over £1·6 million on residential and business park sites, a new coastal link road, coastal protection works and improved landscaping. Towns such as Merthyr Tydfil, Milford Haven and Rhyl are also to receive substantial investment through joint ventures, and 18 other towns are earmarked for urban investment.

Reference to Merthyr prompts me to inform the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, in connection with local sourcing, that the WDA is well aware of the potential for local Welsh firms to supply large inward investors. The WDA and the Welsh Office have programmes to ensure that investors are aware of

opportunities for local supply. An example of that is our "Source Wales" campaign, which is operated by the Welsh Office.

In its rural development activities, the agency has been responsible for creating a wide range of job opportunities in rural Wales and has played a key role in strengthening local communities. At the beginning of last year, the WDA launched its rural prosperity programme. As a result, 15 rural communities will benefit from a co-ordinated programme of action totalling over £5 million. Throughout the Principality, rural towns and communities will benefit.

For example, in Gwynedd, action plans have been prepared for five communities, including Llanrwst, Porthmadog, and Bethesda in my constituency. In Clwyd, places such as Corwen and Denbigh have been targeted. In Dyfed, a programme of improvement works will be implemented in five areas, including Llandovery, Fishguard, and Narberth. The programme will implement a range of new opportunities in the communities concerned to enhance job prospects and local facilities.

I am a great believer in this initiative. The process involves collaboration between the local community, the voluntary sector, the private sector and the public sector, the objective being to harness the skills and enthusiasm of the community with the resources of the public and private sector to bring a new vitality and viability to the communities concerned.

That method is proving effective, due to the willingness of everyone to work together. I am impressed by it. I saw the partnership efforts at first hand when I visited Narberth not long ago. That is the way forward in the rural areas, and I am delighted to say that the agency will be considering other areas for action under the programme.

The Government are fully committed to the work of the agency in rural areas. That is one reason why we have given it record resources this year, which has in turn enabled the agency to increase by £5 million its expenditure in rural areas this year. In total, it is investing £25 million in this financial year, in support of development in rural areas, representing a substantial and growing commitment by the agency.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: On rural areas, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and I referred to the problem of abattoirs. Why is it that the Development Board for Rural Wales can help the project in Llanidloes, but the Welsh Office cannot become involved in the widespread problem in the rest of Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentlemen are right to say that the Development Board for Rural Wales can make grants for abattoirs. Grants are also available outside the board's area. The real problem is that the establishment of a new slaughterhouse cannot be assisted if it adds to the slaughtering capacity in an area. The building of a new slaughterhouse must not create over-capacity—in other words, it must be a replacement of an old slaughterhouse. I have cut my answer rather short, but I am willing to write to the hon. Gentleman giving further details.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) for paying a personal tribute to me on my involvement with Europe. There are great opportunities for Wales, Welsh business and the WDA in Europe. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned that we have been working actively in recent years to develop closer links between Wales and other regions in Europe. We have enjoyed a great deal of success, which the WDA has followed up effectively. We have signed formal partnership agreements with Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany and Catalonia in Spain. We are also working actively with the Lombardy region in Italy and I have signed a letter of intent with a view to an agreement with the president of Lombardy, Dr. Giovenzana. We also have a relationship with the Rhone-Alpes region of France.

Those four motor regions of Europe have among the most powerful economies in the Community. They have considerable populations of some 5 million to 10 million people—6 million in Catalonia—so they have considerably larger populations than Wales. Nevertheless, although our relationships are good and primarily business-based, they extend more widely, particularly in the academic sphere. We lay great emphasis on technology transfer, and I believe that, by putting ourselves alongside those advanced regions of Europe, Wales can only benefit. We also have cultural contacts with those regions.

I am convinced that we must avoid the trap of regarding Europe simply as an abstract concept. It is a real place and a real market, full of opportunity for Welsh business. Europe must be approached in a positive and practical way, not simply with rhetoric.

The purpose of our regional relationships is to form the framework at political and administrative level that will help and encourage our companies and institutions to make practical, collaborative projects and explore business opportunities in each other's territory. It makes sense for Wales to approach this question region to region. We have been very encouraged by the results so far. I have visited Stuttgart, Milan and, most recently, Barcelona to pursue those opportunities. I am in no doubt that such opportunities exist and that there is a good welcome for an energetic approach by Wales within Europe.

I also believe that the partnerships that we are now establishing will be of lasting benefit to Wales within the Community.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that others, outside Wales, are of the same opinion. Wales is admired for the way in which it has pursued industrial recovery and environmental improvement, while at the same time attracting international investment and fostering the growth of indigenous small companies. We are also admired for the way that we are now looking outward, on a regional basis, to opportunities throughout Europe and the world. In many ways, it seems to me that ours is a model for regional development. President Pujol of Catalunña is of the same opinion. Others, in both western and eastern parts of Europe, are now interested in learning from our experiences. The WDA, as my right hon. Friend has said, has a most important role to play in all these sectors.

The House has heard today, from my right hon. Friend, myself and others, a story of growing success, and true co-operation in Wales. I know that some may seek for their own reasons to paint a picture of gloom and doom, and to undermine those who are working for Wales with energy and optimism, but they are the minority, and they have not been sounding off too much today. Clearly, we in Wales are moving forward; business confidence is reviving.

Unemployment in Wales fell last month. Since 1986, long-term unemployment has fallen from 78,000 to 31,200—a reduction of 60 per cent. That is 8 per cent. more

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than the fall for the United Kingdom as a whole during the same period. There are now nearly 100,000 more people in employment in Wales than there were before the 1983 general election. We want quality jobs, and we want to raise the level of remuneration.

Our success in attracting inward investment is well known, but I make no apologies for returning to the theme: Wales does extraordinarily well for its size in the battle—and battle it is—for foreign investment. I must tell the House that these projects do not arrive of their own accord, on a plate, gift-wrapped. Wales has no God-given right to them.

Competition is increasingly fierce. I agree with those who say that it might become fiercer, especially among the EC's 80 or so development regions, yet in 1990, with 5 per cent. of the United Kingdom population, Wales generated 20 per cent. of all incoming foreign investment projects. With 0·8 per cent. of the EC population, Wales achieved 5 per cent. of the investment. Wales chalks up another overseas investment project roughly every three working days—and that does not include business from the country's biggest source of investment, the rest of the United Kingdom.

All this means more jobs for Wales. We are all agreed that we want skilled and good quality jobs. Welsh Development International is charged with the task of continuing to generate such jobs. It has already sown the seeds, for example, with the joint venture between Imperial college, the agency and Newport borough council. Imperial park is set to become one of the leading science parks in the United Kingdom, combining the advantages of a superb site in Wales with the strength of one of the world's leading research institutions.

In addition to the creation of quality jobs, we are creating a better environment for living and working—Wales a "land of quality" as our own logo has it. The success of the WDA's land reclamation scheme is also the envy of many. Today, derelict land is being reclaimed in Wales at the rate of a football pitch a day and at the lowest cost among comparable programmes in the United Kingdom. Last year alone, projects worth £175 million were located on reclaimed land.

This year's budget, at £27 million—10 per cent. more than last year and more than double that of five years ago—will allow more than 1,800 acres of derelict land to be reclaimed. Reclaimed land has provided sites for enterprise zones, the Swansea and Penarth marinas, and for housing, factories and amenity or leisure sites such as the national garden festival site at Ebbw Vale. Nearly £20 million has already been spent on the reclamation of the old colliery and steel works site at Ebbw Vale. More than 1,000 jobs will be created when the festival is in progress.

There is much to be proud of, and the WDA has played a key part in the success so far. Looking forward, the new financial unit will provide the WDA with the headroom that it needs to pursue its tasks in the years ahead. I urge the House to support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Further proceedings postponed, pursuant to Order [22 November].

WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Welsh Development Agency Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) any increase in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament or out of the National Loans Fund or charged on and issued out of the Consolidated Fund; and

(b) any increase in the sums payable into either of those Funds,

which is attributable to increasing the limit in section 18(3) of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 from £700 million to £950 million.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Bill immediately considered in Committee, pursuant to Order [22 November].

Clause 1

INCREASE OF FINANCIAL LIMIT

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am grateful for the opportunity briefly to mention some reasons why we should carefully consider clause 1, which increases the borrowing limit for public finance for the WDA from £700 million to £950 million. I approve of that increase. The WDA has earned it, but it should not have a carte blanche. I have been concerned by one or two aspects of the way in which the WDA has been spending money recently.

The WDA should receive this extra money, but that does not mean that it should be immune from criticism or parliamentary scrutiny of how it is spending this money. That is why I reject the criticism of me by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) for certain things that I have said recently. He said that my criticisms of the agency were damaging to Wales. That would be true only if one believed that any criticism of the WDA was damaging to Wales and that we as Members of Parliament did not have the right to scrutinise the way in which the WDA is spending its money.

If we come across examples of the WDA misspending public money, it is the oldest public duty of all to draw attention to it, particularly when we are being asked to approve a massive increase of £250 million in the public funding available to the WDA. We should specify the acceptable and unacceptable ways of spending that public money.

I want to give two examples of what I consider to be unacceptable methods of spending public money. I am talking of only a small aspect of the agency's operation, which I believe is open to perfectly fair criticism. That is not a criticism of the agency's being at all. If it were, it would be like saying that Beethoven's Emperor concerto is a rotten piece of music because he was drunk when he wrote it. That makes a difference to what we think of his music, and the same applies to my criticism of the agency.

In 1990-91, the agency pointlessly lost around £1 million on its north American operations as a result of naivety and bad management. I am informed that it lost $250,000 on just one weekend—the same weekend, I believe, that the Secretary of State was there—in June this year.

In July 1989, the agency entered into a bizarre three-way arrangement to set up Welsh Development International Inc. as a profit-making company incorporated in the state of Maryland. It was wholly owned not by the WDA itself, or WDI, but by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Carignan of Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Carignan was the chief operating officer of the agency's north American operations. He owned 99 shares of the company and his wife owned one share, in the usual way. That is a bizarre way for the agency to do business. The dangers to which it exposed the agency became evident at the end of June and the beginning of July this year.

I wrote to the Secretary of State about that matter on 13 September, and on 30 September I received a reply that was nothing more than a cover-up. I think that the right hon. Gentleman had been flannelled by the agency.

The $250,000 was lost when Mr. Carignan stripped the office bare of all its expensive equipment—an entire desktop publishing system, audio visual equipment, the database, desks, telephones, security system, and so on. Everything was stripped from the office after it had been in operation for 23 months. I am told that that equipment was valued at $250,000, but the WDA's contract with Mr. and Mrs. Carignan's private company had been so badly and naively drawn up that the agency had no claim to the items that the British taxpayer had paid for to equip the WDA's North American operation. Under the contract between the WDA at Pearl house in Cardiff, WDI and Mr. and Mrs. Carignan, they had the rights to all that equipment.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The agency's accounts are subject to audit by the National Audit Office, for which I am sure the hon. Gentleman has great respect. If he is alleging impropriety of any kind within the WDA, would it not be better if he reported any such facts or allegations that he has to the proper authorities?

Mr. Morgan: There is no need for the Minister to come the old soldier with me. I wrote to the Secretary of State on 13 September, within a couple of weeks of being supplied with documents covering the contract. The right hon. Gentleman is, after all, the person who appoints the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency—who is responsible to the Secretary of State for Wales. To pretend that the right hon. Gentleman has no responsibility for ensuring that the WDA's money is spent properly is an extraordinary alleged abdication of the Welsh Office's financial responsibilities.

The Minister will be aware that the Secretary of State's primary responsibility is to the House, which is why we are debating the clause. The second responsibility is that of the permanent secretary—as the chief civil servant of the Welsh Office—to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, or to the Public Accounts Committee. The third responsibility is obviously that of the National Audit Office, which serves as a safety net in case the Secretary of State has, for one reason or another, not found out.

On 13 September, I wrote to the Secretary of State telling him that something very peculiar had gone on in relation to the three-way contract. The WDA's right to retrieve the equipment was so weak that it even told an employee of Welsh Development International whose personal belongings had been taken by Mr. Carignan—presumably by mistake, when he swept the office bare—that it would be better to let sleeping dogs lie, and not to ask for them back. The attitude seemed to be, "We don't want to get involved. We have lost all that money. We had better just sweep it under the carpet and forget about it." I do not regard that as acceptable. The same applies to the flannel that I received from the Secretary of State for Wales on 30 September.

I have received a parliamentary reply that casts a little light on a round-the-world trip, lasting nearly three weeks, that finished a fortnight ago, on 16 November. Those on the trip went from Wales to Japan, from Japan to Australia, from Australia to the United States and thence

[Mr. Morgan]

back to Wales. The reply to my written question, which I received a few hours ago, suggests that the concern that I expressed was entirely proper, despite what the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West said.

The round-the-world trip was taken by three people, two of them employees of the agency, and one, Mr. Shimon Cohen, the personal public relations executive of the agency's chairman, an employee of Lowe Bell. The trip cost £28,000. This was no economy class venture to seek out inward investment; it was a de luxe trip, costing £9,500 a head.

I question the wisdom of such a venture. The leg between Wales and Japan could be seen as a mission to secure inward investment: it was during that leg that the new investment referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was announced, although it had probably been fixed up earlier. After that, however, the three proceeded to the Great Barrier reef, stayed for a couple of nights in the Holiday inn in Cairns, Queensland, the local holiday resort, and went on to Melbourne and Sydney.

I do not think that Australia is a great place to go for the purpose of seeking out foreign investment for Wales. Perhaps it will be in 10 years' time, when the economy has matured, but it is too early to expect Australia to be able to provide Wales with many factories and jobs this side of the year 2000.

The rest of the trip strikes me as entirely unjustifiable. The three had intended to stay for two nights in Tahiti —from 15 to 17 November—at the Beachcomber hotel, where they were booked in; the plan was then to go on to Los Angeles. That leg of the trip was, however, cancelled. They had planned to visit only one company, and a management change caused the visit to be crossed off the list.

The £28,000 really covered only a serious investment mission to Japan. The three could have returned direct from Japan, but instead they went to the Great Barrier reef, Melbourne, Sydney, Tahiti and then back home. That comes close to spending public money as though it were private money, and as though there were a lot of it to spend—as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said.

I have referred in early-day motions to the recycling of WDA grant money to consultancy companies that have been closely linked with, or owned by, senior officials of the agency. I disapprove strongly of that. However, I approve of the £250 million increase, although I think that it is time that the Secretary of State called in the WDA's chairman for a chat to put him back on the right road.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment; not amended, considered; read the Third time, and passed.

Health Service (Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss the health service in Wales. I recently tabled a question on the health service to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, in which I asked what assessment he has made of the impact of new hospital technology on surgical procedures and treatments in Welsh hospitals. I received a fascinating reply. He told me of the opportunities for deinstitutionalising health care and said that before too long up to 60 per cent. of surgery will be performed on a day basis, with more than 80 per cent. being bloodless. Many lay people hearing that would be amazed to think that any operation, let alone 80 per cent. of day operations, would be bloodless.

My hon. Friend explained further developments, such as the use of endoscopy in gynaecology, orthopaedic and general surgery, whereby a flexible tube photographs body cavities and organs without the trauma of surgery. Lasers have superseded more traditional surgical approaches to treating skin, eye and gynaecological disorders.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to keyhole surgery and laparoscopic cholecystectomies—no wonder the health service abbreviates that to lap-cholies—which are replacing open abdomen gallstone operations. Damaged knee cartilage can be removed without opening the knee. Balloon angiography passes a balloon into an artery in a catheter. Those, and similar developments, are having a profound effect on the size and nature of our hospitals.

My hon. Friend concludes:

"What counts is not hospital bed numbers but providing people with the right services in the right settings."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. *457*.]

That made me want to look much deeper and I have tabled a series of questions to my hon. Friend on the health service in Wales. I regard this as an opportunity to put some facts on the record and further discuss the various arguments.

It is fairly well known that we are living longer. Since 1979, the number of over-60s has increased by 10 per cent. Similarly, the number of over-75s has increased by 62 per cent. I sought to ask my hon. Friend the Minister about centenarians. It is not possible to be precise, but Department of Social Security records show that there were approximately 100 people over the age of 100 in 1979; that has increased to 210 according to latest figures.

It could be said that the national health service is a victim of its own success; it is getting better and better all the time. It is treating us so well that we are living longer and it must now look after other problems and burdens, whereas mother nature would have terminated our existence previously. NHS figures show that the number of patients over 60 has increased by more than 83 per cent. in the past decade, compared with a numerical increase in the age group of only 10 per cent. The number of NHS patients over 75 has increased by 119 per cent., compared with a numerical increase of 32·6 per cent. The small sample of treatment of centenarians shows that their requirement of the national health service in Wales increased by more than the numerical increase.

Having considered the performance of the national health service in Wales, I believe that far too much time is usually spent examining incidental statistics which do not give the true picture—for example, the numbers of hospitals and hospital beds and waiting lists. There is an almost inevitable tendency for waiting lists to lengthen. As for hospital beds, there have been significant closures and new hospitals have been built to replace the old ones. That has often meant that more efficient new hospitals do not need the same number of beds as before.

If one were to dwell on, for example, the statistics for the number of hospital beds, the figures could be manipulated. The building of a brand new hospital in which the beds were kept empty would add to the total number of beds but would not add one jot to the number of patients being treated in Wales.

Similarly, waiting lists are the victims of the health service's success. I remember a while ago that one of my hon. Friends visited a hospital in Wales and was told that the waiting time for hip replacements was more than a year. He dared to ask what the position had been 12 months before and he was told that the hospital had not performed hip replacements 12 months earlier.

There are opportunities for people to queue for treatment that was not previously available. Hip replacements provide a perfect example. During the past decade there has been a 60 per cent. increase in the number of hip replacements. Similarly, there has been a 29 per cent. increase in hernia operations during that period. The increase in the number of varicose vein operations is even more marked at 184 per cent.

In considering bed use in national health service hospitals in Wales, it might be pertinent to take the example of maternity confinements. During the past decade, the length of obstetric stays for maternity purposes has decreased by 33 per cent. GP maternity has not decreased to the same extent—the decrease was about 21 per cent.—but both now represent a stay in hospital of usually 3·7 days. That is an example of a lesser demand for the health service and of a lesser need for hospital beds. Let us bear those figures in mind but think back a little further. In 1961—30 years ago—stays for obstetrics lasted 10·3 days and 9·2 days for the maternity category.

We have more sophisticated health care now, so there are many reasons why it is much more difficult to utilise hospital beds to the greatest advantage. One would imagine that the prevalence of highly technological treatments mean that they cannot easily be picked up and put down. They make planning far more difficult. One also imagines that if there is an interruption to the planning process an alternative cannot easily be substituted to make up for any gap. It must now be much more onerous to plan the use of resources in the health service.

There is a clear tendency with high-tech operations or maternity cases for stays in hospital to be shorter. There is also a marked swing in the amount of national health service work done as day treatment. I am very sympathetic to hospital managers in Wales because they face a much more complex task in trying to plan resources—the most obvious resource being hospital beds. However, I am glad that the Government have adopted a target of increasing the present bed use rate from 73·6 per cent. to 78 per cent. in three years. That is an effective and efficient use of health service resources.

In dealing with total spending on the health service in Wales, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales this afternoon announced a magnificent increase—the figure for 1992-93 will be £1,877 million. What a sum that is when one reflects that in the last year of the previous Labour Government the figure was a mere £481 million. That should really be explained. These days we always have to ask for a definition not only in cash terms but in real terms. I am glad that this afternoon my right hon. Friend was able to translate the figures into terms that most of us could understand. My family of four—myself, my wife and two children—know, as every similar family in Wales does, that the health service will spend £2,600 on every family of four in 1992-93. That is quite a big deal and that is how it should be regarded. It is a better explanation than trotting out the response that there has been a 60 per cent. increase in real terms. The translation is that we are spending more than £50 a week for every family of four.

The obvious next question should be: where does the money go? Possibly the most important task that the Government had to take on was repairing the cuts that they inherited when they came into office in 1979. It must not be forgotten that the only Government in the history of the national health service ever to make cuts was the previous Labour Government. Repairing those cuts was the priority of our Government in 1979.

That was especially evident in capital spending on the health service. Over the five years of the Labour Government capital spending declined by 21 per cent., so it was important that in the following years the Government reversed that trend. The 21 per cent. cut was in real terms and in real terms spending has gone up by 62 per cent. since 1979.

The Labour Government's cuts were not all deliberate. One of the causes of the cut in capital expenditure was the burden of hyper-inflation. We shall never forget that nurses and doctors working for the health service in Wales were among those who suffered badly from hyper-inflation under the Labour Government. Their take-home pay was cut in real terms. Doctors lost 9·9 per cent.; nurses did far worse, suffering a cut of 21·1 per cent. Happily, the Government have now made up for that, too. Since 1979 doctors' and dentists' pay has increased by 28·7 per cent. in real terms and that of nurses, midwives and health visitors—they have had a better deal, but their increase was even more necessary because they suffered more under the Labour Government—has increased by 48·7 per cent. in real terms.

When considering the health service, the most important statistic is not how much has been spent—in real terms or otherwise—but how many more patients are being treated. That is the real proof of the pudding. I am pleased to see that creditable improvements have taken place under the Government. A total of 132,000 more in-patients are being treated—an increase of 38 per cent. since 1979. There are 122,000 more out-patients—a 28·6 per cent. increase. There has been a staggering increase —72,000—in the number of day patients, which represents a 232·9 per cent. increase.

The number of in-patients and day patients increased under the Labour Government, too, but another example of the cuts that they inflicted on the health service is the fact that the number of out-patients fell—not by much, only 3·4 per cent. That illustrates the way in which the health service suffered under Labour.

The improvements that have been made are an excellent tribute to the staff who work so hard in the national health service. However, we should not forget that the increase in

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the number of patients treated is not as large as the amount of extra funding. That is inevitable. The Government had to restore the cuts made by the Labour Government, including those suffered by doctors and nurses. They had to pay more for the more expensive, high-tech care and to meet the needs of the older patients that the health service now has to treat. But it entitles us to ask: can we do better with the health service? The overwhelming answer was that we had to reform it. It had gone on for such a long time in basically the same way that it had to be brought up to date to respond more realistically to the demands of the 1990s.

It was necessary to move forward and to consider whether we may have shed some important elements from the health service that should not have been taken away. If so, we could bring them back. The example that springs most readily to mind is the grade of matron. Matrons always seemed to run their hospitals in the best interests both of the hospitals and of the patients whom they served, so I welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there is to be a Pembrokeshire NHS trust.

So many wild claims have been made for electoral purposes—perhaps "deceptions" would be the right word to describe them—that hospitals would close and basic health facilities would be denied.

I notice that in the debate in Pembrokeshire those who seem to have really studied the matter—the community health council, the staff and the doctors—have come out in favour of the Pembrokeshire national health service trust. It means that a trust in Pembrokeshire will lead to local decisions being taken for the benefit of local people. We cannot turn the clock back, but it is the nearest that we can achieve to the desirable objective of putting matrons back into hospitals. They symbolise to me exactly what the national health service trust is all about.

In the campaign that has been waged against the NHS trust, it is a matter of great regret to me that politicians have also waged a campaign of denigration against the health service in Wales. One target has been the specialist treatment centres. I remember one allegation that was trumpeted loud—that the latest specialist treatment centre would employ only second-rate surgeons and that the presence of second-rate surgeons would lead to general practitioners not feeling that the centres were good enough for their patients. That was the most monstrous insult not only to the latest specialist treatment centre, but to the others which are already working hard and effectively on essentially the same basis to increase the number of operations. Do those who make those claims realise the damage that they are doing and the way in which they are denigrating a wonderful, fine and excellent health service? It may not be perfect, but at the very least we must defend it against political opportunists who make such claims.

We have a very good health service in Wales, although I cannot yet bring myself to describe it as an excellent one. There will probably always be, and there is now, room for improvement. I will give my hon. Friend examples. I have been in touch with him about hearing aids at the University hospital of Wales. There are other problems about ambulances and admissions to the University hospital of Wales. We shall always have such problems and I hope they will be as minor as possible.

We shall have to continue to increase the funding of the national health service. I know that the Government are fully committed to that objective continuing. We must firmly reject those who denigrate the health service and those who make outrageous claims for electoral purposes. People who make outrageous claims will come to realise that they cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): I welcome this debate and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on achieving this debate at short notice tonight. As a user of the national health service, I share the determination that we should continue to improve our national health service in Wales.

As my hon. Friend said, in the past 12 years we have transformed the NHS. When we hear Opposition criticisms about the national health service under this Government's control, it is interesting to look at the latest opinion poll, published just a few days ago. It shows that 93 per cent. of the people of Wales are happy with the national health service under this Government. Despite that, we are not complacent or smug. We want to ensure that the 7 per cent. who are not happy should in future have little or no cause for criticism. That is why we shall continue the reforming programme that we have introduced in the past year or so in the NHS in Wales. We shall not be deflected from it by the Opposition's ignorant criticism.

It is worth looking at the statement on spending made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales this afternoon. We often hear talk from the Labour party about cuts. As my hon. Friend said, the only cuts in the health service in Wales took place under the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979 after the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), was asked by the International Monetary Fund to return from his visit to New York and to cut public spending.

Since 1979, spending on the NHS has risen from £8 billion to £32 billion. After taking account of price increases, the increase in the Welsh NHS spending between 1979-80 and 1991-92 is no less than 58 per cent. in real terms. My right hon. Friend's announcement today brings the increase up to more than 60 per cent. in real terms by 1992-93.

That rate of increase is twice that which occurred under the Labour party between 1974 and 1979. It has meant that the proportion of our national wealth that we spend on health has risen from less than 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. The total figure which was announced in the statement today brings spending in the Welsh NHS this year to £1,877 million. Planned expenditure will go up by a staggering £186 million. That will mean that national health service expenditure will be boosted in Wales to £651 this year for every man, woman and child in the Principality. Those are truly staggering figures. When one looks at the resources that are being put into the NHS, one can see dramatically the difference over the past 12 years compared with the period of the previous Labour Government.

My hon. Friend referred to cuts in the hospital building programme under the previous Labour Government—down in real terms by £11 million, but up, under this

Government, by £27·5 million. He then spoke of the expectations of and demands on the Welsh health service. My hon. Friend was quite right to look in some detail at the changes that have taken place in what people expect —for example, a larger number of elderly people living to a greater age in Wales as a result of improved health care, and the new operations which have become available. My hon. Friend referred to increases in the number of hernia operations, varicose vein operations and hip replacements. It is no longer acceptable for people who have hernias to be told that they must wear a surgical truss. We do not expect women with varicose veins to be given surgical stockings and told to go away. People quite rightly now expect to have that treatment in the NHS, and the new NHS is providing it.

In 1961, the average maternity confinement was 9·2 days. Today it is 3·7 days. One can see clearly the information and the factors that are leading to a reduction in the number of beds. Opposition Members talk about bed reductions—reductions took place under the Labour Government as well—in a vacuum, without explaining the dramatic changes in the way in which people are treated today compared with many years ago.

My hon. Friend mentioned, for instance, that before long 60 per cent. of surgery will be performed on a day basis, with more than 80 per cent. of it being bloodless. He went into some detail—I will not attempt to pronounce some of the words that he found difficult to pronounce —of the new techniques which are being brought in, for example, with endoscopes, lasers and techniques known as keyhole surgery, all of which have reformed the way in which medical technology treats patients in the NHS and has made the need for so many beds and for a large number of old-fashioned hospitals now out of date.

I therefore make no apology whatever for the fact that both under this Government and under the previous Government we have reduced the number of crumbling Victorian hospitals and replaced them with new, modern district hospitals. Since 1979, we have opened major district general hospitals—for example, the Morriston phase I in Swansea, the Princess of Wales hospital at Bridgend, Ysbyty Wrexham Maelor, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Ysbyty Gwynedd, and the Prince Philip hospital in Llanelli—six brand new general hospitals. In the past year we have given approval for two more district hospitals to be prepared—at Neath and at Ynys-y-Plum in mid Glamorgan. We can see that progress is being made on all fronts under the Conservative party in control of the NHS in Wales.

In the 12 months I have been Minister, I have begun construction, attended or opened a new NHS facility in Wales every four weeks. More importantly, spending has led to dramatic improvements in the number of patients treated. As my hon. Friend mentioned, since 1979 the number of in-patients has risen by 38 per cent.—well over a third since we came to office—the number of out-patients has gone up by 29 per cent., and day case surgery has increased by almost 260 per cent. The results for the people of Wales have been dramatic. The number of men under 65 prematurely dying is down by 5 per cent. Premature deaths among women under 65 are down by 4 per cent. Perinatal mortality rates have been reduced by 40 per cent. The life expectancy at birth for someone living in Wales rose by two and a half years between 1979 and 1989. That is why we have been so determined to continue the reforms.

We should pause for a minute to consider what is being done and why. We are carrying out our reforms not because we believe that we need to disrupt the NHS, not because we want to be unpopular, but because we believe strongly that our national health service can be reformed and needs to be improved still further and that is what we are determined to do. We cannot go on, as we have in the past, not knowing the cost of operations, not being able to compare different treatments, operations and techniques in different hospitals and not knowing whether one general practitioner is prescribing more drugs than he needs to compared with another GP. We had to get a grip on spending in the NHS—not because we wanted to save money for the sake of saving money because we were mean-minded and penny-pinching, but because we believe that a pound that is wasted in the NHS is a pound that is not available for direct patient health care. That is why we have introduced our reforms and why we have been prepared to take flak from the Opposition parties which are not interested in the NHS, but only in scoring party political points.

The reforms on which we have embarked are now being copied around the world with 18 out of the 24 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development either planning or implementing similar reforms. The Dekker reforms in Holland oblige purchasers to choose between providers. Germany is asking its sickness funds to cancel contracts with inefficient hospitals and is obliging its hospitals to publish details of their costs. Even in socialist Sweden, the health authorities have started awarding contracts to health centres and hospitals which provide the right service at the right price.

We are determined to ensure that our reforms continue. Only today we announced that an additional 19 GP fundholders had been approved to take control of their own budgets from next April. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales also announced today the establishment of the first NHS trust in Wales. As the constituency Member of Parliament for Pembroke, I am delighted that Pembrokeshire is once again leading the way in Wales by pioneering new forms of NHS management.

I believe that trusts are, increasingly, the natural form of organisation for NHS units in Wales. The more I talk to managers as I visit hospitals throughout Wales, the more it becomes clear that they are enthusiastic about the new reforms and want to be able to go down the road of becoming NHS trusts. I hope that we shall shortly be able to announce that a substantial number of NHS hospitals and units in Wales have applied for NHS trust status. That shows that the Opposition's talk about our policy being unpopular is totally bogus because, of their own volition and without any pressure being applied, the staff and management of the NHS in Wales are applying to the Welsh Office with expressions of interest in becoming trusts. That shows that our policy is well understood by the professionals, who very much want the additional management control that trust status brings.

I find it strange that the Labour party is opposing the idea of NHS trusts because we are simply seeking to return to the system of hospital management boards which existed before 1974. Indeed, at that time the Labour party opposed the establishment of district health authorities and wanted to keep that old system. We have all recognised that big is not necessarily beautiful, and that there is much to be said for devolving management down

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to smaller units, but the Labour party is now in favour of large centralised bureaucracies. It opposes giving local people the opportunity to manage their own health services. I am delighted that we in Pembrokeshire have been able to lead the way.

The Government have also introduced the patients charter. I do not want to go into detail about that now because time is running short, but every home in Wales has already been sent a copy of the charter—or will be in the next few weeks—giving patients details of their rights. I believe that every person in Wales should know how their money is being spent and what services they can expect.

I turn finally and briefly to the Opposition's policy. It is interesting that no Opposition Members have stayed in the Chamber for this debate. Labour politicians throw up their hands in horror and make snide remarks about accountants in the NHS reforms, but they do not say that the opposite of achieving value for money through the reforms is to waste money. That is the most repugnant feature of Labour's dishonesty on health matters. Opposition Members try to pretend that they would spend more, but the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and her right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) say that they cannot. When one looks at the Labour party's proposals, it becomes clear that the Opposition do not have any real policies for reforming the NHS. The only thing in which Opposition Members are interested is stopping reform or any change to the status quo. They would be the mouthpieces of the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees. They would not in any way provide the service that the patients want.

That is why we must continue with the overriding objective set out in our agenda for action, which is to take the people of Wales into the 21st century with a level of health care that is on course to compare with the best in Europe. Our aim is nothing less than the regeneration and improvement of one of our most important public services for the benefit of all our countrymen. It is a challenge that we relish and accept. We shall not fail.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 November 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Employment

9.35 am

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the great progress that has been made in employment and the reduction of strikes since 1979 and condemns the employment policies of the Labour Party, particularly its proposals to encourage strikes, to accept every aspect of the European Commission's Social Action Programme and to impose a national statutory minimum wage, all of which would significantly increase burdens on British employers, undermine competitiveness and destroy jobs.

There is a saying that one should never explain or apologise in making a speech. However, I must break that rule this morning and apologise for the fact that I have an extremely heavy cold, which will make the delivery of my speech a long process—and even longer for the House, which has to be detained in listening to it. I rather foolishly ran round the Staffordshire moors on Saturday with the perhaps to be disbanded 5th Battalion Light Infantry from Shrewsbury and caught a heavy cold. Perhaps that is a lesson that, at my age, I should stop doing such silly things. I therefore move the motion with a glass of privatised water ready to hand.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), the Under-Secetary of State for Employment, who will reply to the motion. I have followed in the national press with great interest my hon. Friend's borough's activities. Unfairly, Redditch has been described as the most boring town in Britain, which produces the most boring postcards. That is unfair on that wonderful area. Anyone who has witnessed my hon. Friend and his especially outstanding and noticeable ties will see that Redditch has many lively things on which it can be commended to the nation. I hope that the campaign about its postcards will end.

I suspect that during today, when we warm up and wake up, we shall have a fairly broad and lively debate. The purpose of the motion is to enable the House, with the Chair's permission, to range as widely as possible over the subject of employment and unemployment, over the Government's policies and record, over Labour's record —not least that of the shadow Chancellor—and over the alternative policies that may be offered if the format of the Government changes.

With the permission of the House, I hope that it will be possible to conclude the debate briefly to allow the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) an opportunity to say something about his motion. The terms of the motion may not be welcome to all hon. Members, but what he has to say deserves to be aired and I hope that the House will ensure that he has an opportunity to make his point today.

I hope that hon. Members will bear with me if I paint a brief picture of my own borough of Shrewsbury and Atcham in Shropshire. Shropshire is about one quarter of the land mass of the west midlands and it is the most rapidly growing county in that area. My constituency fills a broad canvas. Although it is a huge rural area, with 117 villages and the county town, only 3 per cent. of the work force are employed in agriculture. Another 4 per cent. are involved in energy and water industries, and we have a regional headquarters of the electricity board. Thirteen per cent. are in manufacturing. In a town such as Shrewsbury, a high proportion of manufacturing is linked to the defence industry. The superb main battle tank engine is made by Perkins Engines, one of our larger employers. Five per cent. are employed in the construction industry —that may be why the effects of the recession have not hit Shrewsbury as hard as they have hit other parts of the country, although we have felt the cold wind.

A large proportion of people employed in the borough —23 per cent.—work in the hotel and catering and associated distribution industries. Shrewsbury is one of the most attractive county towns in the country, which, because of its historic nature, attracts much tourism. It also acts as the regional centre for mid-Wales and north Wales, as well as for Shropshire.

A further 16 per cent. are involved in finance and commerce. A huge and seemingly ever-growing number of accountants, solicitors and estate agents have made Shrewsbury their professional base. I am not sure whether we have found a professional group that the Government have as yet failed to offend, but if one exists, it is a growing sector of Shewsbury's business community.

A further 6 per cent. are employed in public administration in the area. We have the headquarters of Shropshire county council in the town, as well as the borough council and the district headquarters of the Shropshire health authority.

More recently, on the defence employment front, the "Options for Change" programme has meant that the unified command for the west midlands, the north-west and Wales has been sited in Shrewsbury, under the command of Major-General Mike Regan, who took over on Monday. The borough welcomes the presence of the unified command, although it has caused consternation in parts of Wales and the north-west. We feel that, historically and geographically, Shrewsbury is the right place for it. Thirty per cent. of our people work in associated industries.

Across the borough, about 27,000 people are in full time employment and 10,200 in part-time employment— about 37,200 people in all. That employment pattern is not necessarily reflected in many areas these days. Shrewsbury is still a traditional market town, so employment patterns, especially for women, are different from those to be found in urban areas. Perhaps for many people who come to live in the town that is part of its attraction.

My motion centres on the level of employment, because there are 2,700 more people in employment in Shrewsbury now than there were a decade ago. We still face unemployment problems, but the fact remains that employment has increased by 2,700. That is not to say that we can ignore people who are unemployed and seeking a way of earning a living.

In 1983, a total of 3,774 people were seeking work in Shrewsbury. By 1987, that figure had dropped a little to 3,401. But this year, the figure was down to 2,558, so since

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the general election, unemployment has fallen by 28·7 per cent. Over the five years since the present Administration were returned in 1987, there has been a welcome change in the picture. We appreciate that, over the past 12 months, unemployment has become an issue again, as the figures have begun to rise. Nevertheless, the record over five years is a fall of 28·7 per cent.

In the House there is a tendency to think that the experience of unemployment, and care for the unemployed, rest exclusively with Opposition Members. The election of the Prime Minister has done much to dispel that idea and to show the general public that in my right hon. Friend we have a Prime Minister who is frank about his business background and honest about the employment difficulties that he faced as a young man. The public know that he understands the difficulties of unemployment, having had personal experience of it, which he has not forgotten.

I left school at 15 under a Labour Government. I was one of many thousands of unemployed school leavers. The experience of unemployment has not been exclusive to people who left school under a Conservative Government. Many of us remember that experience from the days of the Labour Government, many of whose Ministers are now in another place.

One brighter aspect of the unemployment figures in Shrewsbury has been the steady and sustained drop in long-term unemployment. It would be unfair to the House to spend hours reeling off reams of statistics but, so that the picture of Shrewsbury is fully painted, I must tell the House that in 1983 there were 1,334 long-term unemployed people. In the four years to 1987, that picture had not changed much; the figure had grown slightly to 1,337. There had been little movement—really no improvement at all—in long-term unemployment.

However, this year the figure has dropped to 548. That reflects the emphasis placed by the Department of Employment, both at the centre and among those who represent it in Shropshire, on trying to help the long-term unemployed in particular. The big drop over the past five years since the 1987 election is welcome news. Undoubtedly, the problems of long-term unemployment are the most difficult to come to terms with and to solve.

That is probably enough history and geography. I shall now consider the way ahead, and the way in which unemployment is being tackled by the Government. Some of those activities will be continued whichever Government are administering the country's affairs in six or seven months' time.

Part of the progress that has been made in our area has been the establishment of the Shropshire training and enterprise council. Our TEC, which is one of 82 in the country, is chaired by David Houghton, who lives in my constituency in Shrewsbury but is the managing director of GKN Sankey, one of the larger manufacturing employers in the constituency of the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott).

I pay tribute to the work, energy and effort that David Houghton puts in as chairman of the TEC. Undoubtedly that takes much time, and the GKN Group is to be congratulated for encouraging its senior executives to play such an important part in an organisation that achieves such excellent work in Shropshire. It is all too easy for senior executives, especially in times of great pressure on business, to say that they have no time to devote to such activities for the community. That has not been the attitude of David Houghton or his group, and they are to be congratulated for that. So are the members of the Shropshire TEC board, who also run demanding businesses yet give much time to developing the TEC and working towards what it is trying to achieve, especially for young people in Shropshire.

As the House will recall, board members have to be in business currently, rather than retired. That is a matter for debate. It is arguable that more recently retired business men would have a constructive role to play. I tend to favour the idea that people who have not been out of business too long could probably play a valuable role, although I accept that, if someone has been out of active business life for two or three years, his contacts and awareness of up-to-date affairs may have changed. That is why the Government have concentrated on keeping people who are actively involved in business. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment may care to comment on that later.

The chairman of the TEC, David Houghton, and his team are backed up by an able chief executive—Roy Knott. Although the TEC has been operating only since 1 April this year, Roy Knott and his team have shown that they are dedicated to the employment training future for Shropshire. They have rapidly pulled the TEC together. This year, it is operating on a budget of about £14 million.

Shropshire's population is just under half a million. The youth training element of the budget for 16 and 17-year-olds is £7 million—roughly half the total budget. Three million pounds is for employment training; for employment action, which is specifically related to longer-term unemployment, there is £500,000. Shropshire TEC turns its attention to various other schemes, too. There is £1·5 million for the business enterprise scheme. Those training activities represent only part of the work in which Roy Knott and his team are involved. They have a business development programme, an "investors and people" programme and an education programme for business partnerships, all of which are of particular help to those who are new to their own businesses.

The TEC is also actively pursuing a much closer liaison between the local education authorities, which provide excellent courses for those developing their business life, and with the careers service and the vocational education structure. One of the initiatives is to encourage more teacher placements in industry, so that those in education who have gone from school to college and back to school as teachers and who have not experienced life in industry or commerce can be exposed to it, the better to assist their pupils in preparing for a working career.

The establishment of TECs was debated and fought in the House, but it is now evident that the TECs are doing good work and that the system needs to be given time to settle down. Equally, we must have realistic expectations of TECs and realise that those that have not been in existence for very long—as is the case with our own TEC, which has been going only since April—will take time to work themselves up to their most effective point. The start that has been made in Shrewsbury, however, is extremely encouraging for my constituency and for the people of Shropshire in general.

I have spent quite long enough outlining the picture in my own constituency and I have no doubt that the House

will wish to consider the national picture as well. Nationally, the fact remains—sadly, it is a fact not often reflected in the media—that there are more people in employment in the United Kingdom today than there have ever been before. Let us compare the present Government's record with that of the Government from whom they inherited power in 1979. There are some 800,000 more jobs than there were then. Many people will say, "They are probably all part-timers, grossly underpaid and grossly overworked, so it is not a genuine increase." But the increase in part-time unemployment——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Right.

Mr. Conway: It may be full-time unemployment for the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, in six months' time.

Part-time unemployment has increased by 7 per cent., so the growth in employment is not reflected exclusively in part-time jobs or twilight industries. We are talking about 800,000 effective jobs.

The fact is, however, that unemployment is rising, and we recognise that. It is rising in every G7 and other industrialised country in the world, and particularly in Europe. Although we are constantly hearing about cuts, and the Opposition and hostile media want to make everything that the Government have done seem bad, one positive development has been that, whereas, when the Conservative party came to power in 1979, there were 6,000 training places for young people, the figure today is 260,000, and that reflects a remarkable commitment by the Government to ensuring that young people who leave school and who do not want to go into higher education have the opportunity to train for a career. We talked about training for decades. We used to envy the commitment of the Germans and French, but British politicians talked about it without doing anything. Today, the opportunities are there. In 1981, 52 per cent. of the population had experienced some kind of work-related education. By 1989, the figure had increased to 73 per cent., and it has continued to grow.

Today, Opposition Members will have the useful opportunity to explain to the House the precise impact of the policies that they will put to Britain and the British people. I think that the facts and figures will explode the myth that more people are unemployed in Britain. The fact is that more people are employed. One wonders what the picture would be in five years' time were the Government to change in the next six months.

Some of us are a little sceptical about the extent of the commitment of the official Opposition and the Liberal Democrats to all things European and wonder for how long it will survive. However, those on the Labour Front Bench say that they are committed to the social charter. Several independent studies, including one by Liverpool university—hardly a hotbed of Toryism—have examined the impact on the business community that the adoption of that charter would have. The Liverpool study shows that it would increase the burden on business by £4 billion per annum, and undoubtedly it would affect employment, business efficiency and Exchequer income from corporation tax.

It has been estimated—although I know that this is a matter of controversy—that the adoption of a minimum wage would result in the loss of some 2 million jobs. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) will come clean on the Opposition's position on the minimum wage, but the principal Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has put on record his own confusion. This debate provides an excellent opportunity for us to hear once and for all—if such a thing can be imagined—where the Opposition stand and whether they accept that a minimum wage——

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): As an hon. Member representing a constituency where industries have always paid low wages, let me ask the hon. Gentleman this. Can he not understand that people in such areas know that low pay has not helped to save jobs in the past? Can we not refer instead to fair pay, and does not the hon. Gentleman recognise that, in 1991, £3·40 an hour is not an unrealistic wage? It is the absolute minimum to which anybody in work should be entitled.

Mr. Conway: The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point which stands examination. In my part of the world, for example, one does not find salaries as high as those paid in more industrialised parts of the country, but, particularly to part-time workers on lower pay, the option that the Opposition offer is not better pay but no pay. That is the difficulty.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman fails to realise that some Members of the Conservative party do not come from the same background as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who inherited huge wealth. Some of us come from more modest backgrounds. I remember my mother leaving home at 4.30 am to go to her part-time, low-paid job. That is precisely how many working-class families on Tyneside had to live in the days of the Labour Government, when the problems of low-paid workers were very much worse.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is one thing to use income support and so on to ensure that people can live at a reasonable level of income but quite another to place the additional burden on firms which may not necessarily be able to afford to pay more? The result of placing such a burden on industry is that the most vulnerable people in society, such as young people and people with disabilities, are either thrown out of work or cannot find work, because insufficient jobs are being created.

Mr. Conway: As ever, my hon. Friend makes a pertinent point, and the House will look forward to hearing of his personal experience, particularly of trade union legislation. Under this Government, provision for most low-paid families has increased dramatically.

I was interested to note that, on 29 June, the principal Opposition spokesman on employment wrote to *The Independent* trying to clarify, for the benefit of the country and the House, his view on the impact of a minimum wage on jobs. Under the heading "Pay, Low Pay or No Pay", the hon. Gentleman wrote:

> "I have not accepted that the minimum wage will cost jobs . . . I have simply accepted that econometric models indicate a potential jobs impact."

I do not know what that will mean to someone on low pay, but to me the message is, "Look out for unemployment." Whatever gobbledegook the hon. Gentleman may have written, that will be the consequence.

The Opposition's policies would have a further impact on the business community and those who create and maintain jobs. Principally because the Labour party is in the pocket of the major trade unions, it is committed to

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repealing the trade union legislation that has transformed not only the United Kingdom's working record but our record of inward investments. It is partly to that legislation that Britain owes its success in attracting foreign investment.

We should think of the citizens charter and the various rights and opportunities that the Government are affording consumers and parents. The general public will welcome those developments and compare the citizens charter with the strikers charter offered by the Opposition, under which we would again face secondary picketing and the impact of flying pickets on wholly unrelated businesses. That would have a dreadful effect on employment and businesses and it would make Britain far less attractive for foreign investment.

I would welcome more information about the jobs tax which has been so widely canvassed and debated. I should like to know whether it would simply add to employers' burdens and at what level it is likely to be set. Independent experts suggest that it will cost 50,000 jobs a year. In addition, there will be an impact on corporation tax. While Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are running around the country promising more jam for everyone, their shadow Treasury colleagues must be wondering how that jam is to be made, given that it is being spread so thickly.

No doubt that tax will have a serious impact on the level of taxation paid by the general public and it will have an equal impact on the business community, which in this country enjoys the lowest rate of corporation tax in the industrialised world. I am certain that our business community would not enjoy the prospect of a change of Government.

Bearing in mind the intervention by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) about low pay—or the offer of no pay under the Opposition—we must consider the application of national insurance contributions in respect of part-time workers. The 1·75 million people who earn less than £52 a week in part-time employment would, according to the Opposition's proposals, fall within the national insurance contributions framework. That would be a retrograde step and would not be welcomed by the lowest paid and the part-time community.

I do not want this debate to be exclusively a Labour-bashing exercise. Those of us who are interested in regional policy are a little concerned. I served on the North of England development council which tried to attract inward investment to the north of England. After that, I served on the Washington development corporation, which was one of the new town boards. We were reasonably effective in attracting new investment to that part of the United Kingdom and we were helped by the implementation of enterprise zones. While the enterprise zones were not loved by the Treasury from their introduction in 1981, they have been hugely successful. Although most of them were established for only 10 years, people in many areas now want to know what will follow them.

While my constituency does not have a level of unemployment that qualifies it for assistance, many people in Shrewsbury travel to work in Telford, which has an enterprise zone. Although not every quarter of the Conservative party accepts this, I believe that regional policy has a role to play and the Government should help to balance the geographical and social problems. If regional policy is properly controlled and effectively directed, it has a role to play for the future. It must be managed in a way that eases the burden on business instead of increasing them.

In that sense, greater emphasis must be placed on inward investment and agencies should not simply run around the country trying to attract jobs from one area to another.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I have been listening with interest to my hon. Friend as he addressed this loosely packed House. I want to contest his proposition that enterprise zones and regional policy have a net effect on the economy. From my experience of working in Reading, which is quite a high-cost area, and being offered constant inducements to move to Wales and occupy free factories ——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Briefly, please.

Mr. Norris: My experience is that the taxpayer simply contributed a great deal of money to move a job 100 miles down the motorway. Will——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should not be speeches.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) for intervening, because he has allowed me time to drink some water. He has had a medicinal effect on my speech.

I understand my hon. Friend's point. Many people believe that regional policies have existed only to shift Government money around the country and to take jobs from one constituency to another. When I was a member of a development council in the north of England, we were not really in competition with other parts of England. Of course, we were in competition with Scotland and Wales, which had greater resources and could call on the support of the royal family to impress Japanese visitors more effectively than we could. We were principally in competition for foreign investment.

I recall a time when the Government of Eire offered 10-year tax holidays and they were very effective for many businesses. However, businesses that were tempted to move often found that the move was not so attractive and that they could not sustain a long-term plan.

The employment pattern in this country is disproportionate, particularly in the areas further from the centre. Without the balance of regional policy, the cluster in the south-east because of its proximity to the channel and the European market would make life in the south absolutely unbearable. We are trying to help people get their cars from one part of the south-east to another and in some small way to spread the employment burden.

Businesses must carefully consider the disadvantages of long communications connections for their markets. The motorway system has undoubtedly improved dramatically under this Government, particularly to the north and north-west. That has made it more attractive for businesses to move from the south-east and we particularly welcome that in the midlands.

People who prattle on about the north-south divide amuse me. Bearing in mind your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the constituencies of hon. Members who represent northern and north-western areas, I should point

out that business commuting to Doncaster, Newcastle upon Tyne or Edinburgh has been dramatically transformed as a result of British Rail's capital investment in the east coast line. Businesses can now move around the country more easily, and that places pressure on local authorities, which must ensure that they are more supportive and welcoming to businesses instead of erecting, as is sadly so often the case, planning barriers that drive away potential investments.

The House should recognise that in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister we undoubtedly have a man who has experienced unemployment and has demonstrated that he has not forgotten that experience. He is so patently honest about it and that shows the nation that he cares. The unemployed voters we survey and canvass understand that our Prime Minister is a man who understands their difficulties.

In the next six months, the country will have to compare the record of this Administration against that of the previous Administration and consider the alternative of many of the Opposition retreads on offer. The country must conclude that, in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we have a man we can trust. I am confident that the verdict from the general election and the slogans from the British people will be "Kinnock can't" and "Major makes it".

I hope that we will have an opportunity today to hear what the Opposition propose. Once we have heard that, it will be clear that my constituents might face a bleaker future on both the business and employment fronts. When the time comes, those policies will be firmly rejected.

10.7 am

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on his motion and on giving us an opportunity to debate unemployment. The House should spend more time debating unemployment. The present appalling unemployment figures are graphic evidence of this Government's failure.

We all remember that in 1979 the Conservative party spent an enormous amount of money festooning the country with posters saying that Labour was not working.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): It was very effective.

Mr. Leighton: As the Minister said, that cynical propaganda was effective. At that time, unemployment was 1·3 million and falling. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what the position is now. Is not unemployment now double what it was in 1979?

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish my sentence.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I like to see eager young men at this time on a Friday morning, so I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am enjoying the hon. Gentleman's speech so much that I want to take part in it. The hon. Gentleman said that unemployment was 1·6 million—1·3 million—at the end of the Labour Government. What was it at the beginning of the Labour Government?

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman cannot get his figures right. He thought that unemployment was 1·6 million when it was 1·3 million. The best thing for him to do is to listen for a little while and perhaps he might be in a better position to understand. Of course, I shall gladly give way to him again if he wishes to make such helpful interventions.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: Here we go again.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Would the hon. Gentleman care to answer the question by saying what the figure was at the beginning of the Labour Government?

Mr. Leighton: I shall give several statistics in a moment. I do not want to give too many. Statistics are boring. If the hon. Gentleman will contain his eagerness and enthusiasm, he will be rewarded. One of the figures that he might like to consider is the grievous economic and financial cost. We might hear from the Minister what the cost of the dole queue is. It is well in excess of £20 billion. Each unemployed person costs in excess of £8,000 and that huge cost has ruined the public finances.

We used to hear a lot about the iniquity of borrowing and having a public sector borrowing requirement. The Government used to boast that they were repaying the national debt. The cost of unemployment is now so high that the Government are in the red. Perhaps the Minister will tell us how many billions the Government are borrowing this year to pay for the mistakes that they made on unemployment. Perhaps he will tell us about the human cost—the heartache, the misery and the destruction of family life. We did not hear much about that from the hon. Member from Shrewsbury and Atcham. The Government's rhetoric, which we will no doubt also hear before the election, is all about choice and opportunity. We might even hear a bit more about the classless society. When we hear the cynical and hollow rhetoric we should remember that the Government are busy destroying choice and opportunity for millions of people.

A man or woman is what he or she does. That is how a person defines himself. Often, when we meet people, they ask, "What do you do?" If one does nothing, one tends to feel that one is nothing. That is damaging to one's identity and sense of self-worth and it is destructive to society. That matter is closely connected with the increase in crime, which is sometimes denied by the Government. It does not surprise me in the least that we have riots every summer. Law and order does not come from having large numbers of policemen on the streets; it is social control. People ask, "What will the neighbours think? What will people at work think?" Of course, if one does not have a job, if one has never had a job and if one does not think that one will ever have a job, what the hell—what does it matter what people think? One has no perspective on the future; one lives for today. That is part of the explanation for crime and riots.

Let us consider life on the estates dotted around the country. Children see their fathers idle. Home is where there is never an alarm clock going off in the morning. Children never see their parents going to work. They see their older brothers and sisters leaving school without a

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job. That is disruptive of society and family life. When such matters are raised, the Government blame everybody but themselves. They normally blame the victims and look for scapegoats. They say, "It is the parents' or teachers' fault; it is evil." They never blame themselves for the unemployment that they have brought about.

The truth—it is a brutal thing to say—is that the Government are using unemployment as a weapon of policy. It is a deliberate feature of Government policy to have a high level of unemployment.

Mr. Forth: Would the hon. Gentleman, therefore, in the same breath say that in France, where unemployment is higher than it is in the United Kingdom, the socialist Government are similarly using unemployment as a weapon?

Mr. Leighton: I intend to refer to that point as well, if the Minister will contain himself.

We often hear the recession referred to as though it is an act of God or an act of nature, or as being like the weather. One gets up to see whether there are any signs of confidence or whether there are any green shoots. The Government engineered the recession. They set about deliberately to cause a recession. They deliberately increased interest rates. When the Government deliberately set out to increase interest rates and to shut down large parts of the economy, they knew that they would cause unemployment.

At the beginning of the recession there was much talk about the economy and whether there would be a hard or soft landing. If we have a healthy or successful economy, why not keep flying? Why have a landing of any description? The Government deliberately increased interest rates to cause a recession and they knew that it would lead to mass unemployment.

When we referred to high unemployment and the pain and damage that it was doing to our society, what did the Prime Minister—then Chancellor of the Exchequer—say? He said, "If it is not hurting, it is not working." The policy was deliberately to cause unemployment. He was saying, "Yes, it is hurting. That is proof that it is working. I want it to hurt." That is Government policy. The present Chancellor of the Exchequer made the Government's position absolutely clear. Incidentally, where would politicians be without the phrase "make our position absolutely clear"? The Chancellor said that high unemployment was "a price well worth paying". Mass unemployment was a deliberate Government policy and he said that it was a price well worth paying.

The Conservative party has become what it was before the war—the party of chronic mass unemployment. Were we to have the misfortune of the Conservative party winning the next election, it would be the party of chronic mass unemployment for as far ahead as we can see. Mass unemployment is built into all its calculations for public expenditure. Full employment is not among its economic objectives.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman is a reasonable, moderate and fair-minded man. Therefore, he would wish to give the true context of what he is saying. Is not it the case that unemployment is now 13 per cent. below what it was in 1987 and about 21 per cent. below what it was in 1986? As my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) pointed out, there are 800,000 more people in jobs today than there were in 1979 when the Government came to office.

Mr. Leighton: I begin my reply with a rhetorical question. I know that Mr. Deputy Speaker would not want me to provoke the hon. Gentleman into replying immediately. However, during that period, what happened to the number of people of working age? The hon. Gentleman will find that the working age population increased much more substantially than the number of jobs that were created. Those extra people in the labour force are, therefore, purely a function of the population growth and of the fact that the population is growing much faster than the economy. That is why there is high unemployment. That must be the case otherwise how could the hon. Gentleman answer the puzzle that there are hundreds of thousands more jobs but also much higher unemployment? The simple explanation is that the population has grown. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) used to research such matters and should know the answer to these questions, but I will give him the exact figures because I looked them up in the Library only yesterday. I am now whetting his appetite for the information that I shall give him later.

Nowhere among the Government's objectives have I ever heard any mention of full employment. I listened to Treasury questions yesterday when the Government appeared to be saying that the level of inflation at the moment would justify a cut in interest rates, that industry is crying out for such a cut in interest rates but that now, given that everything must be subordinated to the exchange rate mechanism, our growth, employment, interest rates and everything else must be abandoned and sacrificed to that end. There was no suggestion that full employment was one of the Government's policy objectives.

I do not think that Ministers care about unemployment. I have seen no evidence to that effect. It seems to be well down their list of objectives. I have no doubt that they subscribe to obscure and extremist economic theories that anaesthetise their conscience on such matters. The Secretary of State for Employment has now been in office for 22 months, during which time there has been the most enormous increase in unemployment yet. I find it impossible to detect any remorse in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's demeanour and attitude. I have yet to hear him apologise to those hundreds of thousands of people whose lives he has blighted and whose happiness and prosperity he has destroyed. Instead, he tries to ignore it altogether. He never talks about it. I have never heard him address that problem.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman appeared before the Select Committee on Employment on Wednesday—only two days ago. I asked him, "Secretary of State, since you have been in office, how many extra people have become unemployed?" The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not know, or at least he pretended not to know. He would not answer, but he, at least, should have known the figures. I can make allowances for some of the Back-Benchers who may not have the figures, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman lives with these figures every day and one would have thought that he, as the Secretary of State, would know. However, when I questioned him, he said that the number of unemployed was "irrelevant". Those were his words to the Select Committee.

I was able to help the right hon. and learned Gentleman by telling him by how much unemployment has increased since he took on that job. The figure was 857,000 people. Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman show any concern about that? No. Yet that is an abysmal figure. I do not know of any other Secretary of State for Employment under whom unemployment has risen by that amount. It must be a record. It should be in the "Guinness Book of Records", yet the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not know the figure and showed no concern. He does not seem interested in unemployment. Could we have more telling proof of the Government's failure than the fact that unemployment has increased by 857,000 during his 22 months?

The Government's policy is to ignore unemployment and the associated figures. At employment questions on Tuesday, one of my hon. Friends asked the Secretary of State what was the total increase in unemployment across the European Community, the increase in the United Kingdom and the latter as a percentage of the former. The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not answer—he never does. He said only that there were no comparable estimates. In other words, he pleaded ignorance again. I do not know whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is really not interested, but he pretends that he does not know.

Again, I have consulted our estimable Library, which had no problem giving me the figures. I received a nicely typed letter within the hour telling me that there has been no increase in unemployment in many European Community countries—in fact, there has been a decrease in unemployment in some. The figures, which the Secretary of State did not know, or pretended that he did not know, or was not prepared to tell the House and the country, show that there has been an increase in unemployment in the European Community in the year to September of 972,000 while the figure for the United Kingdom is 777,000. In other words, 80 per cent. of the increase in unemployment across the European Community is solely in the United Kingdom. It is therefore the responsibility of the Conservative Government and I hope that the Minister will explain and apologise for that.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is now basing his case on arbitrary time periods. He must know that what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was saying to the Select Committee was that his period in office was irrelevant as a way of measuring the movement in the figures, not that the figures themselves were irrelevant. That is nonsense, but the hon. Gentleman is now doing the same thing again.

In addition to giving the House the figures that he has just given, will he tell us about the actual levels of unemployment in socialist Spain, socialist France and in some of the other continental countries for which he seems to have so much admiration? Will he explain the connection between socialist policies and high unemployment?

Mr. Leighton: The policy that has led to an increase in unemployment in France and Spain is those countries' adherence to the exchange rate mechanism——

Mr. Forth: Ah, but that is the policy of the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Leighton: That is the explanation for those figures. In such a regime, the strong and the competitive are successful, but the non-competitive are less successful and that fact will be revealed in their unemployment figures.

Our question about the movement in the figures in the past year is the sort of question that is regularly asked —it was a fair question, not a trick one—yet when we asked, "What has been the increase in the past year", the Secretary of State did not say, "You should have chosen another year"; he simply said that he did not know. Then, when we pressed him, he said that it was "irrelevant". The question that he described as "irrelevant" was by how much unemployment had increased during his 22 months in office. How on earth can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that that is irrelevant? Is not it grotesque and bizarre for the Government to be reduced to saying that the issues that we raise in our pointed questions are irrelevant and for them to refuse to answer? Is not that ghastly evidence of their failure? I know that the Under-Secretary of State is extremely articulate and intelligent and that he can always put a gloss on a case, but if he cannot do better than that, he cannot have a case.

The truth is that for 22 months the Secretary of State and his Government have been destroying jobs at an average rate of 1,250 a day—that is how the figures work out. They are still doing it and will continue to do so.

One way to disguise what is happening has been used this morning by the hon. Members for Shrewsbury and Atcham and for Battersea, who said that there are now more jobs than in 1979. I now come directly to the point of the hon. Member for Battersea. His argument will not wash because the simple explanation is that the population has grown. Again, I asked the Library for the figures, which show that between 1979 and 1990—perhaps the Minister will agree that that is a reasonable period because it is not only one year, but the Government's entire period in office—the population of working age grew by 1,862,000. That is an increase of 5·6 per cent. It was much greater than the increase in the total work force in employment. The total work force grew, not by the figure of 800,000 given by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham, but by just over 1 million. To have stood still we would have needed over 1,862,000 jobs. That is the explanation. So it does not help the Conservative case to say that the total number of jobs has grown. It has grown because the size of the country's population has grown. The most important factor is the level of unemployment and the waste of paying people to stay on the dole and ruin the public finances.

Mr. Bowis *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Member for Battersea has dredged up another figure and found another angle. We shall see what he has this time.

Mr. Bowis: Although I welcome the hon. Gentleman pointing out that even more people wish to be born in Britain when there is a Conservative Government and come through to the working population, surely the hon. Gentleman does not suggest that the increase in the population is entirely people who wish to be in work. Many of them are married women, people with children and so on. The hon. Gentleman should accept and give credit to the Government for the fact that, far from employment dropping, as he implied, job opportunities

[Mr. Bowis]

have risen to the tune of 800,000 in that period, which means that an additional 800,000 people have been able to find jobs during the Government's period of office.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman is making a brave attempt, but his effort gets worse each time and he is digging himself into a deeper and deeper hole. He suggests that the extra people on the dole queue do not all want jobs. Of course they want jobs. They would not be allowed the dole if they did not want jobs. They are claimants. They have to prove that they are looking for work in order to receive the dole. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Let me give the hon. Member for Battersea some more information. More than a third of the increase in the total number of jobs is part-time jobs. I do not criticise part-time working, but to include those part-time jobs without talking about full-time equivalents is not to compare like with like. In addition, three quarters of a million of employees have more than one job. Some have three jobs and they are counted three times. Whichever way ex-researchers, budding and Back-Bench Members of Parliament approach the matter, the position is appalling.

In "Alice in Wonderland" press releases which the Government turn out six times a day, the only way forward that they seem to suggest is to have what they call realistic wage settlements. I have a press release here. It says that we must contain wages and get away from what the Government call the going rate and inflation-proofed settlements. Let us be clear that the Government are not referring to bosses' pay. They are not talking about the managers of the privatised monopolies, who have doubled and trebled their wages, their pay—I think they call it their remuneration packages, which is usually in telephone numbers. The Government do not want to stop those people having inflation-proof settlements. Indeed, such people's pay increases are two, three, four, five, six or seven times the rate of inflation. The Government want the ordinary workers to have wage settlements which are below the rate of inflation. In other words—let us be clear—they must have wage cuts. That has been happening. The level of wage increases has been falling. But has it helped? The answer is no, it has not. The important factor is unit labour costs, which is a function of productivity. If wages and productivity rise together, unit costs do not rise. But we have suffered the second Conservative recession and, by definition, in a recession productivity declines. So, although our nominal wages are coming down to nearer the German levels, our unit labour costs are not.

My figures about wage costs come from not the Library but the Department of Employment. They were given to me on 17 October.

> "Unit wage costs in mining and manufacturing in the former Federal Republic of Germany rose 3 per cent. in the year to the second quarter of 1991, which is the latest available information."—[*Official Report*, 17 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. *235*.]

That is less than the increase in wages because Germany's productivity is rising.

In the same period unit wage costs in manufacturing in the United Kingdom rose by 11 per cent. So our workers are taking home lower wages. That is the Government's way forward. But does it help? With the recession and the drop in productivity, even though the nominal wages of British workers have fallen, it does not help. The economy is still spiralling down.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: Let us hope that this time the Minister will say something sensible. He is girding his loins and he should get better as he goes along.

Mr. Forth: We should reinject some realism into the debate at this point. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that average earnings increases in the United Kingdom are still running at about 7 per cent., whereas, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the inflation rate is half that at about 3·5 per cent? That does not suggest that, overall, the British people are taking the dramatic pay cuts that the hon. Gentleman suggests. In some areas people are agreeing to lower wage settlements. They judge what is appropriate in their circumstances. How the hon. Gentleman can square the figures that I have given him with the claims that he makes? I should be interested to hear.

Mr. Leighton: The claims that I make merely regurgitate what I read in press handouts from the Department of Employment, which claims that it is succeeding in bringing down the level of wage increases. The level is still higher than in Germany, but Ministers go round saying that we are converging and that our inflation rate, interest rates and wage increases are coming down to nearer the German levels. I agree that we have not yet come down to German levels, but the all-important difference between Britain and Germany is that Germany is a successful country where the economy is growing, productivity is increasing, employment is rising and unemployment is falling. Germany is the benchmark against which we must measure ourselves in everything that we do.

The main reason for German success is investment in research—large German companies put enormous amounts of money into research—plant and, most importantly, training. So we must ask how our training compares with that of Germany. The answer is that it does not compare at all. I wish to examine the Government's record in training.

I must not give too much punishment to Conservative Members, so I shall pass over employment training. ET is beginning to lack all credibility—I do not think that the Minister will intervene to say that I am wrong. The previous Secretary of State for Employment used to give constant hype about that wonderful programme, which he said was the greatest training programme in the western world. Every programme that the Government introduce is the best programme in the western world. They gave us all that hype about preparing the workers without jobs for the jobs without workers. We do not hear much about that any more.

We know what the Financial Secretary to the Treasury thinks about ET. He thinks that it is such a waste of money that we should not spend any more on it. My local training and enterprise council, the East London TEC, said of ET in a newsletter issued in October:

> "The plain truth is that ET was misconceived. It has been a flop."

The Minister is giving the delightful smile that he gives from time to time to cheer us up. Let us draw a discreet veil over ET. I remember when it was first thought of. Roger

Dawe came to the Select Committee and said that 600,000 people would go through the scheme in one year. I said, "Are you sure you'll get that?". He said, "Yes, we are sure." The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will give us the numbers, which are much smaller.

The Government claim and pretend that there is a youth training place for every young person who does not get a job. I shall be interested to hear whether they do so again today. Ministers stand at the Dispatch Box regularly and say that they are committed to the guarantee. When hon. Members raise the subject in the House, because we learn from constituency experience that that is not so and that the guarantee is not being delivered, Ministers deny it. I doubt whether they will deny it today because the evidence is so overwhelming.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman is having another go.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has been exceptionally generous in giving way during his speech and I am grateful. I have here a copy of the same leaflet that he was quoting from, saying that ET was a flop. It continues:

"What we do not want is to replace it with another monolithic, all-things-to-all-comers programme. We need a range of types of training to meet the needs of different market niches."

It is because of recent Government initiatives that the TEC is able to say that and put that sort of initiative in place. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Mr. Leighton: The TECs make the opposite case. They say that they do not want another monolithic programme, but

"need a range of types of training"

to meet the needs of a different market. That is what they need, but they have not got it. The hon. Gentleman is in an area covered by the same TEC as my constituency and I urge him to have discussions with Mr. Iain MacKinnon and Mr. David Dickinson, the chairman.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: Let me answer the question first. The hon. Gentleman should ask them about the extra menu of programmes for adult training. That is what they want.

All the TECs have been writing to tell us that there must be a strategic review of adult training, which is totally unsatisfactory. That is what they want, but they have not got it and they do not have the money to provide it.

I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) to a letter dated 22 November which I received from the East London TEC concerning the YT guarantee. I am certain that he will be interested in it and I will give him a photocopy if he would like one. I raised the subject of YT in my constituency, saying that 500 youngsters were without YT places. Another Under-Secretary of State said that I was misinformed. That upset me grievously. I try to be well informed, especially about what is happening in my constituency. I am not the only one saying that the guarantee is not being delivered. East London TEC is saying so, too. I shall not read the whole letter, but only relevant parts. It says:

"Therefore, I must conclude that we cannot now meet the YT Guarantee—and we see no prospect that we will be able to do so for some time. We are using our 'best endeavours' to meet the YT Guarantee and DE officials have acknowledged that, but the scale of the need is too great for a quick solution."

The TEC has a low unit price for YT and says that there have been

"years of under-investment in YT locally."

I hope that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford is paying attention. I want him to stand up on his hind legs and demand some money for young people in our areas. The last sentence of the letter reads:

"We are conscious that many local young people remain without an offer."

That is the situation in our area.

No doubt the Under-Secretary of State will say that the Government have handed youth training to the TECs and that it is nothing to do with them. They will say that they are committed to YT, but have handed over the details.

The Select Committee on Employment wrote to the TECs to get confirmation of the figures and has received replies from almost all of them. The replies are in the Library and I urge hon. Members who are present and who show a great interest in the subject to read them. The TECs say that half of them are not delivering the YT guarantee or are having grave problems with it. They are trying to deal with demand-led programmes with cash-limited budgets. They tell me that the YT programme was predicated on employer participation and say that the Government are spending less per unit place and that employers are supposed to make a larger contribution. However, many employers are not making any contribution, but are pulling out. The sums just do not add up. Often, the unit price is so low that it is not worth the while of training providers taking part.

In a moment the Under-Secretary of State will say, "I am committed to the YT guarantee."—especially after the note that he has just received from the officials in the Box. He will then say that TECs have a responsibility for delivering the guarantee, but they contract YT out to training providers, who tell us that they are pulling out because it is not worth their while financially. Employers, who have not given any guarantees, are not taking part.

When I raised this subject in an Adjournment debate the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State tried to detract from the letters I quoted by saying that they were out of date. The Under-Secretary nods his head. I have bad news for him. It is no good trying to tell me that this time. We summarised the letters that we received from the TECs and sent a letter summarising them to the Secretary of State. We sent a copy of our summary to all the TECs because we wanted them to know what we were telling the Secretary of State on their behalf and we did not want to misrepresent them. We have received some replies from the TECs. I have one here, dated 21 November. I hope that the Under-Secretary will not say that that is out of date. Bexley, Bromley, Croydon and Sutton—South London —TEC writes:

"I am content that our principal concerns have been fully reflected."

On 19 November, Humberside TEC wrote saying:

"The concerns expressed in that letter reflect very closely the views of the Humberside TEC."

On 25 November Hertfordshire TEC wrote:

"In early September we had still got 1,500 young people under 18 registered at Careers Service Offices as unemployed and available for a training place."

It is no good saying that this letter is out of date as it only arrived the other day. It continues:

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"Hertfordshire's unemployment rate has risen by 140 per cent. in the past twelve months . . . "—

the TEC knows what is going on, even though the Secretary of State may not—

"there are now 30,000 unemployed people in Hertfordshire. With the recent reductions in funding for Employment Training we are only able to provide 990 ET places".

That means 990 places for 30,000 unemployed people.

In a letter dated 29 October, Thames Valley TEC states:

"We have problems: local young people covered by the Secretary of State's guarantee are having to wait for places at the moment since available places are full. This is due to the markedly higher levels of unemployment which have hit this area so very quickly in recent months."

Essex TEC has been negotiating with the Department of Employment and has been given some extra money, but the TEC tells us that because there are no employer placements it has had to create project placements. it says:

"Where no work experience provision was available due to the recession, the Essex TEC has been able to establish new training workshops which simulate work experience in a training environment. Unfortunately, workshop training is extremely expensive and in some cases is more than twice the cost that the Department is currently paying the Essex TEC for its provision."

If employers do not make contributions, the TEC has to set up workshops. That is costing them twice as much, even with the extra money given by the Department of Employment. Because the unit price is too low, the programme is failing. The South London TEC is 40 per cent. underspent on its budget. It cannot spend the money, although it is facing substantial demand for youth training places from more than 1,000 young people. How has it underspent its budget, with 1,000 people waiting for a place? It is because

"the negotiated Unit Price turns out to be too low to generate the volumes of training required."

In other words, training places cannot be bought for the puny sums that the Government are offering.

What do the Government intend to do about cash? All the TECs are telling us that they need more cash. We have had the autumn statement, but there was no mention of any new money for YT. On Wednesday we asked the Secretary of State about it. After he was passed a note, he explained that it had not been mentioned because it had been announced previously that the money for YT was to move from £840 million to £850 million. I then asked the simple question whether that meant that there had been a cut in real terms after allowing for inflation. Again, he would not answer. I do not think that he said that the question was irrelevant, but, after being pressed on the point several times, he said that we could work it out for ourselves. He could not bring himself to face the truth —that the amount of money for YT is being cut.

All the TECs are crying out for more money. What do the Government do? They cut the sum available. When we ask the Secretary of State about it, he cannot tell us the truth, but has to say that we must work it out for ourselves. We are clever enough to do that. We have worked it out and it is a cut. That is appalling. It is betraying our young people and failing the TEC movement.

I have been going on too long and I must bring my remarks to a close. I will not say much about employment action. I asked how many people were on EA and the figure seemed to be about 2,240. That is equivalent to two days of extra unemployment. That is marvellous, isn't it? So far this great new programme has soaked up just two days of extra unemployment.

Finally, I appeal to the Government to support the TECs. The Government tell us that the TECs were set up to develop business and enterprise, not just to run YT and ET. The Training Agency could have done that. As the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham said, people were brought in from the private sector. Retired people are not taken on, not because they do not have the knowledge but because they do not have the clout. The chief executive officer is the boss of a big organisation and what he says goes. The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) may not agree, but once one is retired, one does not have the same influence. That is why we have the big wheels from the private sector.

Those big wheels are saying, "We didn't come into this just to run programmes for the unemployed and to fail in that because we do not have the money. We want to do the proper job that we signed up for." I do not know where the phase "sign up" comes from. What is the difference between signing up and signing? Nowadays people sign up; they do not sign. All the big wheels have signed up for the TEC movement and it is falling apart.

The Governmment must not maintain their cynical attitude. Their policies are failing the economy, employment and training, and they are strangling the TECs. They must buck up and do better.

10.53 am

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words in this debate. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) kindly suggested that the second motion in the name of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) might be reached, even he had little hope of there being enough time for us to reach the third motion. I am grateful to see present my good friend and neighbour in Wandsworth, the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who has clearly come along to support my motion. I fear that he may be a little disappointed. I apologise to my hon. Friend and the Front Benches that I may have to slip out for a constituency engagement when they come to respond to the debate.

It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). In the past few years we have accompanied each other down many paths. I always enjoy hearing his speeches. He often speaks dutifully, as today, about one side of the argument. He was kind to leave time for others to respond with the other half of the argument and we shall come to that. He referred to the unemployment problems that people undoubtedly face, although the latest figures show a welcome fall of 25,000 which he forgot to welcome. The other side of the coin is the increase in the number of people in work today compared with the figure when the Government took over in 1979.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham on his good fortune in having this debate and on his inimitable and eloquent introduction. In particular, I welcome what he said about our Prime Minister. He rightly highlighted the fact that our Prime Minister has known, and therefore recognises, the problems faced by people who are, however temporarily, without work. His tribute was a fitting one.

Moreover, our Prime Minister has climbed the ladder of opportunity. Unlike many people, he has not sought to haul up the ladder behind him. He has left it down. His whole policy and philosophy is to enable others to follow those steps up that ladder to opportunity and individual and collective prosperity.

We have always had people out of work. Today's debate is about how we enable such people to find fulfilment, preferably in work, and meanwhile to prepare for work. Every hon. Member has a real care for however many people there are without jobs. That is right and proper.

It is also right and proper to put the debate into the perspective of the additional jobs that have been created. Fewer people are out of work, certainly in my constituency and nationally, than at the last general election and many fewer than a year or two before that. The record shows that half of those who lose their job find another job within three months. If 7 or 8 per cent. are without jobs, as is the case in my locality, 92 or 93 per cent. are in jobs. That is the good picture behind the debate while we consider, as we certainly should, the real individual and family problems facing people without work.

We all meet people in our surgeries and as we knock on doors who are genuinely seeking work, but finding difficulty in terms of their and their families' finance and morale. That is why I am keen that we should do whatever possible to enable people to find a useful way of filling their time while they are out of work to prepare themselves for future jobs. I draw the attention of the House in particular to those who suffer additional problems, perhaps because they have a disability of one form or another. It is even more difficult for someone with a disability to find a job opportunity at a time of higher unemployment than it is in good economic times.

Another category whose interests we must look after covers people who have been in prison or in care. Again, it is difficult enough for them to find job opportunities. We need to encourage them to train. I pay tribute to the Share Community, which looks after people with disabilities, and organisations, such as the Apex Trust, which look after people who have been in prison. They do a great deal of work to promote training and encourage employers to take on such people.

We must pay special attention to unemployed young people and those who lose their jobs when they are over the age of 50. Such people find it more difficult to sustain themselves and to get back to work.

The causes of unemployment are many and varied. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East was a little unjust in seeking to place all the blame on one Government. For a start, we know that unemployment is a consequence of economic cycles. Such economic cycles occur all over the world and the present unemployment and recession are not peculiar to this country. It is a worldwide and certainly a western problem, and it must be tackled.

Another cause which perhaps the hon. Gentleman has forgotten and needs to go to the Library to consult the history books about—I know that he is an assiduous user of the Library—is the problem of past industrial relations. Does he forget how many jobs were lost in the 1960s and 1970s because of bad trade union and management practices? The hon. Gentleman did not pay tribute to the Government for their policies on industrial relations, strikes and pickets, which have enabled industrial relations problems to be corrected. He did not speak about the problem of unemployment caused by excessive pay demands. Pay should not be suppressed, but it should be linked to the ability to pay, and I welcome pay increases that are linked to productivity. The absence of such a link leads to the loss of jobs.

Mr. Leighton: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the lead should be set from the top? Should workers in the privatised monopolies aim for the same sort of increases that managers have received? The hon. Gentleman says that high wages eliminate jobs. Will those managers all be sacked or will their numbers be reduced?

Mr. Bowis: I agree that the lead should come from the top. I hope that the people who have awarded themselves excessive pay rises will hear that from me and the hon. Gentleman. Such increases set a bad example and I hope that managers in the private and public sectors will remember that the setting of pay for those who are high on the ladder affects the willingness of people further down the ladder to respond sensibly.

Over the years, there have been other difficulties, one of which the hon. Gentleman implied in his reference to the increase in the number of part-time workers. Women, especially married women, have increasingly desired to return to work and remain there by having a break to give birth. They then return quickly to the jobs for which they have been trained. That is a good way for women to contribute to society, but, of course, it has implications for the unemployment statistics.

The final factor influencing employment are the changes in the developing world. When the hon. Member for Newham, North-East and I were buying one or two shirts in Sri Lanka, we must have been conscious that we were supporting the industry of the developing world, and rightly so. The pattern of raw materials coming from the developing world to this and other developed countries for production and sale of finished goods, often back to the developing world, has changed. That is a fact of life and it influences unemployment.

The Opposition are always quick to speak about unemployment. I suspect that Labour has bemoaned unemployment vigorously and at length during every period of opposition. However, every Labour Government have increased unemployment, as the Library will confirm. Anyone who examines the Opposition's policies will fear very much for people without jobs and for those who will become unemployed should there ever be a Labour Government implementing the policies to which the Opposition are committed.

Labour is committed to the restoration of the worst of the industrial relations abuses, to allowing flying pickets, unofficial strike action and secondary strike action, which all lost jobs in the past. It is committed to a high tax policy, high borrowing and high spending, which in the past have led to pain, suffering, misery and job losses. The IMF had to intervene in the past and in the future it would be the European Monetary Institute. Such policies cannot work, because cuts have to be made at a difficult time and even more jobs are lost.

I do not have to speak to people on my side of the political and philosophical fence to understand what a minimum wage policy would cost; I need only listen to Gavin Laird of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and read in the Library the works of the Fabian Society and, on Sundays, *The People*. All the independent experts—by

[Mr. Bowis]

the hon. Gentleman's lights—say that a national minimum wage on the lines proposed by Labour would lead to the loss of 200,000 to 2 million jobs. If one is generous and takes an average, 600,000 to 800,000 jobs would be lost, and the country cannot afford that.

A Labour Government would roll over on their back and uncritically accept any proposal from the European Community in order to prove that they are more communautaire than the Conservatives. They would accept directives such as those calling for fewer part-time workers, and would welcome a 48-hour rule. Hon. Members might be happy to consider a 48-hour rule, but the farming community, to name but one, would find it extremely difficult at harvest time if they were not allowed to ask their farm workers to work more than 48 hours a week. That is why we should regard Labour's albeit genuine crocodile tears as extremely salty.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East asked us to consider a policy of full employment. That sounds like motherhood and apple pie until we examine what full employment really means. It would mean that the whole of the potential work force would be employed at any one time. It would be like having all our soldiers in the front line at the same time. There would be no reserves to call in as the army started to push the enemy forward and nobody to call in to support a fall-back.

As many people as feasible should be in work, but we should have an unemployment reserve in the economic battle when the economy expands. Otherwise, there will be no reserves, imports will be sucked in and workers abroad will benefit. By an unemployment reserve, I do not just mean a register but a reserve of people who are being trained and well paid and who feel part of the economy and of our industrial community. Only people who decline to join that reserve should be included in an unemployment register.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my hon. Friend agree that probably the only economy in which full employment was implemented was the Soviet Union, where those who did not have a job were usually found somewhere to go, such as Siberia or the Gulag archipelago? We have seen the result of that in the Soviet economy. It is not exactly one of the world's most prosperous economies, although the Opposition used to admire it greatly before it decided to drop its socialist credentials.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right, and when one recalls that one of the world's biggest employers was the Red Army, one can read a lot into that country's full employment policy.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*——

Mr. Bowis: I note that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) has left the Opposition Front Bench for the Back Benches. I do not know whether that means that he has changed his policy or is distancing himself from the official line of the Labour party on unemployment issues. Either way, I happily give way to him.

Mr. McKay: Even though the hon. Gentleman's view of full employment is entirely wrong, his other comments on the subject puzzle me. Full employment does not mean everybody working. It could involve, for example, people retiring aged 60 and that could happen now. In other words, the type of full employment that he envisages is not realistic.

I am puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's perception of a reserve of unemployed, a sort of Dad's Army pool of people waiting to be employed. He envisages a highly trained, skilled, well-paid pool of unemployed. How does that equate with his opposition to a minimum wage? If we are to have a fairly well-paid reserve of unemployed people, why not have a minimum wage?

Mr. Bowis: A minimum wage involves the Government dictating to private employers what they should pay their workers. I answered that point in an earlier intervention. I am talking about a public sector reserve, state supported, composed of people without jobs for the time being, who are receiving training. We now have in power a Government who have produced the biggest-ever package of training in support of people who are out of work. We should adapt that and perhaps incorporate into it some of the schemes that have been tried and could be improved. Perhaps the TECs are coming up with new ideas about the sort of training that should be developed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) spoke recently on the radio about his idea of paying, say, £100 a week to people joining a community task force, enabling them to obtain work experience and contribute to society, which does not simply mean filling in holes in the road but involves going in for a range of useful activities, from working on environmental improvements to caring for the vulnerable in society. The training could be technical or non-technical, enabling people to help, for example, in hospitals and so on.

We should look seriously at such ideas, because, unless we say that everybody should be in work at the same time, we cannot just forget the pool of unemployed. We must consider how to look after them, train them and give them the self-esteem and confidence they deserve. They would obtain that more readily if they were involved in some sort of community task force. The employment reserve of which I spoke would help them to contribute to society and to their personal future and well-being. Having answered the hon. Gentleman's intervention, I shall understand if he now wishes to return to the Opposition Front Bench.

I have a bid to make for additional assistance, and I suggest that there are three means by which we could help people without work more than has been possible in the past. The first would be to expand the system of training credits with which the Department has been involved. I understand that the pilot schemes have proved effective and I was delighted to be told in answer to a parliamentary question this week that other pilot schemes elsewhere in the country will be launched. The sooner that idea is introduced universally, the sooner individuals will have the right to a credit which they can cash in for training and further education, and we should be talking of both—of further education colleges and training schemes.

Secondly, adult education as a whole—or continuing education, as I prefer to call it—has an important role. Handing out certificates recently at my adult education college in Wandsworth, I was enormously impressed by the number of special needs students who received one,

who never in their lives thought that they would qualify for a certificate. They and I were proud of what they had achieved. That shows what adult education can do.

That type of education can also achieve access, which can lead on to other types of training and education. Often, people who hesitate to come into the world of education—perhaps because English is not their first language, because education has not been highlighted as important in their households or because they missed an opportunity earlier in life—can come into adult education, not necessarily taking vocational courses in the first instance, but going on to take such courses, which provide them with the training and self-assurance they need. I hope that the Minister will discuss that point with his colleagues in the Department of Education and Science.

Thirdly, we must consider further ways to assist lone parents. I have particularly in mind community nurseries and similar support. All too often, when I meet constituents in tower blocks in Battersea, the women—often young women with children, the fathers of whom have disappeared—need opportunities to get out, to become trained, to earn and, in due course perhaps, to start to buy their council flats, building opportunities for themselves and their children. They are unable to do any of that because they cannot leave their children and start to climb the ladder that the Prime Minister has exemplified. Because I want that type of development to take place, I urge the Minister to discuss those issues with his colleagues in the Department of Health and in the Treasury.

I again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham on initiating this debate, particularly since virtually everybody I speak to about employment, especially if they are out of work, tell me, "It's tough. We need help, guidance and training. But we also need Conservative policies because those are our best hope for getting the economy into the sort of condition that will ensure that we have real job opportunities in the future."

11.17 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Being an MP can be a frustrating experience. Seventeen minutes ago, in the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre across the way, there began the presentation of training awards by the Prince of Wales. The Secretary of State is there, as are people from Coleg Powys, in my constituency, to receive awards, and I should be there. The instructions say that I cannot enter the building after 11 o'clock this morning. Even so, I hope that the House will forgive me if, after my speech, I am absent from the Chamber for perhaps a quarter of an hour while I go there to congratulate the winners of training awards.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on moving a motion about employment policies. Although I am not entirely convinced by the contents of the motion, I agree with parts of it. To point to progress in employment matters seems to be an anachronism when unemployment is today higher than it was in 1979. We appreciate, as other hon. Members have said, that more people are in employment.

One of our objectives should be to utilise labour resources, which are valuable to this country. They should be deployed to the maximum, while full employment is an ideal that we shall not reach. None the less, we should try to get as many people into employment as possible. The fact that unemployment is now double its 1979 level shows that the Government have failed.

One must look at the other side of the coin. There has been a good reduction in the number of strikes; we must give the Government credit where it is due. Their policy on reducing strikes has been successful, partly owing to the introduction of democratic ballots before strike action. That measure is not considered controversial on either side of the House; my party finds it easy to support ballots. Therefore, the two aspects of the motion need full consideration.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the success of the Government's policy is also to do with the banning of secondary picketing, which the Labour party would bring back with open arms?

Mr. Livsey: Having seen some of what went on with secondary picketing in the 1970s, I regard it as the unacceptable face of socialism. I experienced it on one or two occasions and I feel that it is not the way to proceed. It did the Labour party a great deal of damage, from which it is still recovering. Labour Members do not speak about it much now, and may now be moving in a more constructive direction.

Whether we have a successful employment policy, with the maximum number of people employed, depends on the state of the economy. That, in turn depends on how the economy is managed by the Government of the day and on the quality of management in British industry. Having worked in ICI, I know a little about the management of industry. I always felt that there was room for improvement in top management. Although the standard of management has been variable, it is much better than it was 10 or 15 years ago as a result of fiercer competition and a great deal of fall-out. The approach to management is not quite so lackadaisical as it once was, but there is still a long way to go, particularly in employment policies within the companies. The most progressive companies have an excellent record, but others could improve their labour and personnel management.

Yesterday, John Major celebrated his first year as Prime Minister but we know that he was Chancellor in Mrs. Thatcher's Government in the latter part of it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is breaking with our convention. We refer to hon. Members not by name but by their constituencies.

Mr. Livsey: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Prime Minister cannot be proud of his performance in the past year. GDP has gone into reverse, falling from 2·4 per cent. growth to minus 3·7 per cent. That is bound to affect employment, as shown by the number of business failures, which has risen in the past 12 months by 14,000, and the number of mortgage repossessions, which has topped the 100,000 mark. That is not progress.

Even in the past 12 months, unemployment has risen from 1·66 million to 2·47 million—more than 700,000 in a short period. Some would say that that is because of the recession, but we are in a slump rather than a recession. In the part of the world that I help to represent—Wales—unemployment stands at more than 120,000. The Government cannot be proud of unemployment levels of 7·6 per cent. and male unemployment of 10·1 per cent.

[Mr. Livsey]

Unless the Government's employment policies are more effective, unemployment could hit 3 million within the next nine months. I hope that that will not happen, but it is a possibility.

Inflation has been a problem in the past. It has stoked catastrophic business failures and contributed to increased unemployment. High interest rates, which were the order of the day until relatively recently, have undoubtedly contributed to that. The introduction of a uniform business rate has also had an adverse effect on business, especially small businesses.

Unfortunately, training has been cut by 40 per cent. since 1988. By May 1991, 66,000 training jobs had been axed in the voluntary sector alone. The Secretary of State had quite a struggle last summer in his discussions with the Treasury on the revised community training programme. He appears to have been capped by the Treasury and to have lost the battle. If so, training has been downgraded by the Cabinet and has less priority than it once had.

I know about the scourge of unemployment, because my family suffered badly from it. My father, who was a well-qualified master mariner, was unemployed for four years in the 1930s. He left me a legacy of letters inquiring about jobs, and the replies. I have tens of them in a box at home, and they make sad and tragic reading. They show what happens when an economy goes into a downward spin. They prove that Conservative policies did not work in the 1930s and are not working in the 1990s. Sadly, my father had to find work in the Gulf just before the last war and died out there when I was three years old. He went to find work 3,000 miles from this country, with tragic consequences, and I have lived with that all my life. It explains in part why I hold the political philosophies I do.

Today, in my constituency of Brecon and Radnor, where my father came from and where I come from, unemployment has doubled in the past 15 months. Only last week, I spoke to a garage owner who told me that almost every other customer was either losing a job or had just lost one in the past month or so.

Current Government policies seek to tackle the problem, and it would be churlish of me to say that the Government are not trying to come to terms with the unemployment problem. From the tenor of speeches that have already been made this morning, it is obvious that the work TECs do must be acknowledged. Their formation has been a good thing. The only problem is that they were not introduced soon enough. The Government are now considering skilled training, which is vital. Without a skilled work force, we cannot compete in world markets. That problem needs far more attention.

The employment action programme has created more places. The Government's targets of 30,000 places in 1991-92 and 60,000 in 1992-93 are at least a start in the right direction. They apply to people who have been out of work for six months or more. It is welcome that the TECs are administering that scheme and that a minimum reward is at least available in that situation. None the less, there is a long way to go and parts of the training programme have been cut, which has serious implications for this country's future.

We know less about the official Opposition's policy on the issue than we should, as is the case with many other aspects of their policy. They appear to rely on temporary work schemes that will be rewarded by a "proper rate for the job". The Labour party rightly emphasises the importance of training, but it has not made any financial commitment to it or identified any sort of financial commitment to the training programme. We are still involved in a guessing game about the Labour Opposition's commitment.

I shall not turn to the vexed question of the national minimum wage. I am proud to confess that, in the 1970s, I campaigned for a national minimum wage because I felt that it was the right thing to do then. With the wisdom of hindsight and the benefit of several years' experience, I now see that analysis, particularly involving econometric models, shows that it brings a reduction in employment.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Which one?

Mr. Livsey: Labour's own Fabian Society has produced information on the subject.

Mrs. Gorman: Is the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) aware of the statistics from the United States, where a national minimum wage was introduced in about 1947 when unemployment among the unskilled black people was lower that among white people, as the black people worked for less? As the national minimum wage was edged up, so the position altered. Now, unemployment among unskilled black people is six times higher than among whites, because employers have to pay the same rate to both, and they express their prefence by choosing white employees. We might deplore that, but it shows that the national minimum wage has harmed the most vulnerable people in that society.

Mr. Livsey: I take note of what the hon. Lady has said. I do not know of that detailed work, but she has made an interesting comment on the position in the United States.

It would be good to have a national minimum wage, but the practicalities in terms of employment would be dangerous for the management of the British economy. Wage levels in the United Kingdom are often too low; they are certainly far too low in my constituency, which worries me. The fact that there are low wage levels in many parts of this country is a result of the stop-go economy and stop-go management of the economy over the years, which have now brought about a recession. Unfortunately, a minimum wage in Britain at present would create more unemployment among the young and among women, who are both on low wages. I believe that low wages are an absolute scandal, but in Britain they are a result of the economy running at half-cock, which is regrettable.

It is easy for the Liberal Democrats to do a demolition job on the way that the economy has been managed and the way in which unemployment has crept up, but we must provide some analysis of remedial and positive measures to tackle the problem. We believe that, to reduce unemployment, there must be a national minimum income —which is different from a national minimum wage.

A national minimum income can be achieved through integrated tax and benefit systems that take into account a person's total net income—taking all factors into account. We believe that the various circumstances of different people can be calculated, and allowances made for them. We want reformed and strengthened wages councils to protect workers and employers in traditionally low-paid sectors. We believe that that is important.

Those improvements depend on a successful macro-economic policy and the way in which that is run by the Government and the European Community with which we are now closely connected. We need firm anti-inflationary policies, which would be better achieved through an independent central bank. We need much more investment in education and training and a much more effective competition policy, particularly in those industries that have recently been privatised, such as British Telecom, and the gas and electricity industries, where there should be real competition, not misuse of monopolistic powers. We need far more effective policies on small businesses to encourage employment and greater economic activity. The taxation system must be reformed and investment made in infrastructure.

Mr. Bowis: As the hon. Gentleman obviously takes econometric models to bed with him, I wonder whether he would look at the implications of Liberal Democrat policy on one of the small industries to which his party is committed—the armed forces. The Liberal Democrats are pledged to cutting those forces by 50 per cent. What effect would that policy have on the unemployment figures?

Mr. Livsey: I do not love econometric models that much; I just take note of them. Our armed forces policy was to be phased in over 10 years, not introduced at a stroke, as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) appears to think. That policy, like that of the Government and the official Opposition, is at present under review because of the enormous changes that have occurred during the past two years. It is two years since we were talking in those terms, and the defence policy of every party is now under review. One need not come to the same conclusions now as one did two years ago.

Tax reforms are important, as is investment in infrastructure, particularly in public transport, such as British Rail and other forms of high-quality public transport, to take cars off the road. We must encourage investment in the environment and in environmental schemes, as well as investment in research and development, which is currently far too low in the United Kingdom.

Clearly, profit-related pay is extremely important if we are to stimulate higher-quality jobs, greater commitment to employment and more jobs. That aim must be linked to industrial democracy, profit-sharing and share ownership.

Such is the importance of education and training that we have committed ourselves to a programme of investment of £1·7 billion. The Liberal Democrats are not frightened to say how they would raise the finances to do that. We have regularly said that we are prepared to put another 1p on the standard rate of income tax to ensure that people are properly trained and skill-trained, so that we can tackle the problems of the 1990s and try to achieve a much more dynamic and effective economy. That will be achieved only by putting education and training at the top of the agenda.

Liberal Democrats believe that unemployment is a key issue which must be tackled head on, and I am glad of the opportunity to address the issue presented by this debate. Our programme "Just the Job", announced in July 1991, will create 396,000 jobs and is extremely important.

We believe in local employment initiatives in housing, schools and hospitals. We also believe in energy initiatives for insulation and draught-proofing—great programmes for housing. We also want to increase funds for training and enterprise councils and would like an additional £675 million allocated to TECs to increase training quality in the existing programmes and provide an extra 71,500 places. We think that such programmes will help to tackle the skill problems of this country.

We back the development agencies in Scotland and in Wales. They have been successful in bringing in inward investment and greater job opportunities in those countries. It is vital for small, home-based industries to grow as well. We believe that, in that way, Britain can pull itself out of the slump and out of the recession into better times economically.

11.39 am

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I congratulate the Government on their remarkable turnround of our economy from the strike-ridden, dilapidated, collapsing structure in 1979, when we came in, to the dynamic and modern economy that we have today. It is unfortunate that there are people who are out of work, but we should try to keep a balance and remember that most people who want work are in work. Perhaps over 90 per cent. of those who want a job can find one.

Each day more people arrive in Britain and find work. Whenever I go in a minicab on my way to a radio or television programme—the companies are kind enough to take us in a car—I end up discussing with the driver how he has come to Britain in the fairly recent past and now has a job driving round London. I have met people from Africa, Europe and all over the world. Every day such people come to Britain and are still able to find work because they are determined to find it. They come here to make a success of their lives, which suggests to me that, despite all the gloomy statistics and stories that we hear from the Opposition, this is still a country of enterprise and opportunity, if one really wants to find that opportunity.

I welcome the fact that as a country we do not drive the unemployed into begging or starving. We are quite generous towards unemployed people. They are not well off, but they are not on the breadline and it is to our credit that we have a structure that supports people when they are between jobs. Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities for people here.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: What the hon. Lady has just said is astonishing. If she walks within a few hundred yards of this building, she will see young people, whom the Government have deprived of benefit, sleeping rough and begging on the streets because of the total indifference of people such as the hon. Lady and Conservative Members.

Mrs. Gorman: I take the hon. Gentleman's challenge. If he can produce individuals who will come and have a discussion with him or with me, I bet that we could find somewhere where they could work, especially in a city such as London where jobs in the tourist industry, in the retail trade and in the back-up to that are still available. I urge the hon. Gentleman to get a copy of the *Evening Standard* every night and to have a look. I urge him to go to the railway stations each weekend and to get the newspapers that are handed out free of charge. I urge him to read the newspapers that come through my door in Billericay. Each week, the free papers are stuffed full of job advertisements. That is how the newpapers pay for themselves. Although

[Mrs. Gorman]

I am sorry for those young people, I believe that their problem is often psychological, rather than inability to find work. In a constructive spirit, I certainly would wish to help them to find work and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would too, if he will bring those individuals to our attention.

The Government have a great deal of which to be proud in their record since 1979. Our economy continues to advance, to become more technological, to bring out new products and ideas and to develop new industries. We always forget the new industries that are blossoming. At this very minute things are being designed under railway arches about which we have no idea, but which will emerge as new industries in the future. Industry does not stop because one of our political parties likes to suggest that everything in Britain is going wrong.

How could we have guessed 10 years ago that there would be a video shop on every street corner? How could we have guessed that there was an enormous and developing business in entertainment of a new kind, with a range of information technology and machinery? All that is going on now and we do well to remind ourselves of it.

The Opposition's attitude to industry is negative because they largely view the world from the past. They always look back to the old smokestack industries. In fact, people did not have a very nice time working there, with dirty conditions, long hours, heat and underground work. The jobs from which we say that we want to rescue people are in industries which, thankfully, are now in decline. The Labour party should be pleased about that, but, because those industries are its old power base, it naturally regrets that it no longer has trade union members coming from that source. The trade unions have sustained the Labour party over all these years and Labour gave the trade unions the appalling powers which were so badly abused in the run-up to the 1979 election when, as we all know, the country was brought to its knees by a new strike almost every week.

As an employer of labour, I have vivid memories of that time. I am one of the hon. Members who has started a business from scratch and who has been an employer of quite a lot of people whose jobs were created out of that initiative and enterprise. Another feature of our economy is that we have many enterprising people. We have people such as Alan Sugar, who start off in life without any great qualifications. They start off on a barrow in a market and they build up an enormous industry. People such as Richard Branson and the Body Shop founders constantly come up with new ideas. The freedom and liberalisation of our economy which were created by this Government allow such people to get new industries off the ground. That is another reason why, for the sake of our economy, we must stick with the Conservative party. We do not want to creep back to the economy that we had when Labour ran the country.

The Opposition are very fond of the idea that one can create new "safeguards" for employees. They love the idea of saying, "We must have laws that say 48-hour working weeks, two years' maternity leave and a minimum wage." They imagine that by designing such schemes and by imposing them on employers, they are protecting workers. They may change the job conditions for some people who are in employment. A business that depends on its trained work force may be able to take on board those extra restrictions on profitability. By and large, those extra "advantages", as the Labour party calls them, for the employee have to be paid for out of the profits of the organisation as a whole and they eat away at the capital that the business would ultimately have available to reinvest in jobs. The pay-off in the long term is probably bad, although it may seem quite good in the short term.

I am more concerned about employers who employ only a few people and whose main criterion is the flexibility of being able to take on staff, to change their hours from time to time and, on occasions, to get them to work 60 or 70 hours a week when they are busy. We do that in Parliament and my minicab drivers tell me that they work about 60 or 70 hours a week. People who do shift work often choose far longer hours than the basic hours that the Labour party would have them work.

If we impose those conditions on employers we shall discourage some of them from employing anyone. We never know how many jobs are lost that way. There are no bureaucrats going round counting the jobs that never happened, the jobs that went away or the small firms that have packed up because they could no longer make a profit under the new controls and restrictions on their work force. Nobody adds those up, but they are significant.

The restrictions often affect the most vulnerable people —people who badly need a job, but do not have the qualifications to get one in, say, ICI or the Department of Trade and Industry. Such people's best chance of employment is with small firms which may not be very profitable. To force increased employment costs on such firms, as we do when we add all that baggage to employees, is likely to drive them nearer to the margin, nearer to closing down. We can create conditions for an employer, but we cannot make him employ someone under those conditions. We must remember that, when we talk about the desirability of improving workers' conditions.

Furthermore, if restrictions eat too far into profits, employers will look elsewhere to get their work done. I remind the Opposition that many people come to this country to persuade businesses here to make their products abroad. When I ran the Alliance of Small Firms, we had regular visitors every year sponsored by the Government of Korea, who wined and dined small business men and tried to persuade them to take their work to Korea to be done. When things become too expensive to do in this country, the jobs will go abroad. Many employers will seek alternatives—perhaps now in eastern Europe. I understand that Rolls-Royce and one of the German companies—Mercedes, I believe—are about to open a new factory in Poland or eastern Germany. They will make things there which, if the climate were better and the labour more flexible and less expensive, they would have continued to make in this country. Yesterday we heard the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) complaining about the loss of jobs at Jaguar in her constituency. Where have the jobs gone? Perhaps they have been driven out of the country and gone abroad because extra conditions have been imposed here. Certainly that can happen. The conditions may sound wonderful, but they can have dire consequences.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is my hon. Friend saying that imposing a condition to help a class of worker is quite likely to

disadvantage that very class? For example, insisting on conditions that would in theory make the employment of women more likely often has the opposite effect.

Mrs. Gorman: I agree. I could not have said it better or more concisely. Employment is a two-way trade and it is as well to remember that the conditions that we in the House think can be imposed on employers may backfire on the very people whom they are supposed to help.

No one asks the woman in the part-time job in the bookshop whether she would like the extra maternity leave and all the rest of the baggage, or whether she would prefer to keep her job. I remember when sick pay and conditions were added and when, under the wages councils, wage rates were raised. Little shops employing people part time had to drop some of their jobs. They could not make more money from selling books. People did not suddenly rush into the shops to spend more money on books because the Government said that staff had to be paid more. So jobs disappear and nobody notices how many—except the people who lose out.

I urge the Government to continue to resist the idea of more regulations being attached to employees. The same applies to the minimum wage. We have heard plenty of talk about that and I entirely support the Government, not for dogmatic reasons but because I know that the minimum wage would harm some of the most vulnerable people—the unskilled, the ethnic minorities, and women.

Whenever there is a slight recession in the economy, we immediately hear talk of displacement. People ask whether we should encourage women to go to work and whether they are taking jobs away from men. We are beginning to hear such talk again and it is absolute nonsense. Women are a crucial part of our economy. Not only do they represent almost half the work force—we often seem to overlook that fact—but they are the most flexible element in it. They fill the nooks and crannies of the economy. They do part-time jobs which may not pay enough for a man, but which may be crucial in adding that little bit extra to the family income which makes all the difference between bread and marge and bread and jam. It is terribly important to remember that, although many of them prefer to do a part-time job because they have children to look after, the role of women is vital.

Many of the jobs that women occupy, particularly in nursing, teaching and retailing, are not jobs that automatically lend themselves to being done by men. Most people like to be nursed by women when they are in hospital. Most young children are probably better off being taught by women and I am sure that the chaps share my view that, when one goes shopping, it is nice to find a woman behind the counter. I have no objection to being served by a man, but such jobs go well with the work pattern, temperament and niceness of women. It is absolute tosh to suggest that, if we pulled all those women out of the work force, there would be loads more jobs for unemployed men.

Mr. Conway: My hon. Friend, who is known throughout the House for her staunch defence of women's rights, makes a valid point, and many hon. Members have wives who enjoy the opportunity to work on a part-time basis. But does not she agree that the pressure placed on young women to consider it in some way demeaning to concentrate on their young family is having an effect on the social fabric of Britain that we do not see on the continent, where there is much less pressure on young mums to work? Is that fact perhaps reflected in the harmony of family life generally and in the divorce rate?

Mrs. Gorman: I listened with interest to what my hon. Friend said, but I reject most of it as absolute nonsense. We must learn to trust adults in our society to make decisions for themselves. Many young couples have joint mortgages and, when the wife has a baby, they still have the mortgage to pay. In those circumstances, the wife needs to earn a bit of money to keep the family out of debt. Women do not go out to work to pay for tights and lipstick, as some people think they do, but out of necessity. Many women are abandoned by men—something which men seem to do frequently these days—and have to raise children on their own. Those women need a job, not only to supplement their benefit but because, psychologically, they need a break from that very closed environment.

These days, women are highly educated and highly trained. Half our university graduates are women. Half those training as doctors are women. Half of those who go in for accountancy and the legal profession are women. Some 80 per cent. of people entering teacher and nurse training are women. We spend an absolute fortune training our young women and rightly so, but when they get married and—perfectly naturally—start a family, we slam the door in their faces and start talking about them as if they are misbehaving socially because they want to keep in touch with their work. That is nonsense; it is a ridiculous waste of money.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend is a wonderful exception to the rule, but does not she agree that women are sometimes their own worst enemies? I know that, on some selection committees, it is the women who say that they never wish to be represented in Parliament by a woman. It is often women who dislike the idea of other women being properly employed and having responsible jobs.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention—although I think that the situation is changing rapidly. Men get to the House largely by going through certain routines, one of which has traditionally been involvement in local government, and thus gaining experience.

Mr. Conway: And having a good wife to back them.

Mrs. Gorman: And a good wife to back them up.

Since the introduction of domestic machinery, women have been able to find the time to take part in activities such as local government. They begin to build up their confidence and training and it is to be hoped that many of them will eventually come here. As I have said before, if I had my way, every constituency would elect both a man and a woman. The idea was originally Bernard Shaw's. That is the proper thing to do. If we did it, half the people sitting on these Benches would be women, and I would welcome that. Women are getting there, although we should remember that there is a glass ceiling over the heads of some of the women who are already here—a subject for another day, perhaps.

Nowadays, we have numerous domestic applicances the washing machine, the drip-dry shirt, throwaway nappies and Marks and Spencer with its marvellous

[Mrs. Gorman]

pre-cooked food, and all those things have done much to emancipate women from the drudgery of the kitchen sink and endless cooking for the family.

All that has given women the option to re-enter the work force or to become involved, as I hope more will, in the political life of this country.

It is important for us to help women to keep in touch if that is what they want. Some women prefer to stay at home with their young children. We should remember that 80 per cent. of women with children under the age of five choose to remain at home and that is perfectly reasonable. Nevertheless, more and more women with children of school age wish to return to the work force and we should help them to do so.

It is part of my political crusade to persuade the Treasury to grant tax relief on the cost of caring for children while women are at work. That is particularly important for women during school holidays, in the mornings before school opens and after school. If we could help women in that way, we would make their lives easier and, incidentally, we would win a few more votes.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have agreed with almost everything that my hon. Friend has said up to this point. However, tax reliefs are a pernicious and damaging part of the tax system. I believe that there should be low tax rates and very few tax reliefs.

Mrs. Gorman: I accept my hon. Friend's point. In an ideal world, we would have a flat tax rate of 10 per cent. and no allowances. However, we use tax to encourage certain activities. For example, tax relief on mortgages is intended to encourage people to buy their own homes. We also provide businesses with tax assistance, not least on motor cars for transport. Indeed, if a business man has a rottweiler to guard his business premises, that is tax deductible. However, if a women needs help, she is treated as though she is asking for the moon. In fact, women are simply asking for the kind of help that men take for granted in their jobs. They have secretaries and personal assistants. Even if a man simply has a young labourer or apprentice who hands him tools, that helps the man to be more productive. I should like more of that help to be given to women, not just because we want to be nice to them, but because they have a perfect right to go out into the world and exercise their talents.

I compliment my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his support for the Hansard Society's Opportunity 2000 initiative to encourage more women who opt for the workplace to get through into the top jobs where they can make a vital contribution to the design of new industries and the top element of our society. Women have a tremendous amount to contribute to management structures because of their intellect and because of their natural personalities and culture which are kinder, softer, nicer and more pleasant. We could do with more of that in the board room. That is another reason why we should help women back into the work force.

I want to refer to training because it occupies a great deal of our time in employment debates. In Germany, young people automatically work for a business when they leave school if they do not go to university. They work for two years at what in the old days would have been called an apprenticeship. Every business in Germany, even bakers and plumbers, offers that training. The young person, who is actually not very productive, is paid a small amount of money. He is not expected to be able to live on it: it is pocket money plus. Between the ages of 16 and 18 or sometimes a little older, the young person lives at home and learns on the job. It is possible for the employer to provide such training because it is not costing a fortune to employ the young person.

However, if a young person is taken on in this country, he must be paid 50 or 60 per cent. of an adult's wage. That young person is not productive. The work that he can do at that age—unskilled and inexperienced—does not warrant an employer paying that money. If we force such wage levels on employers, they will give up training young people on the job. That has already happened in this country. That policy was dictated by trade unions in pushing up wages generally. They have made it more expensive to take on youngsters. Incidentally, that applies not only to small firms which may have trained two or three apprentices but to big industry.

Every year, ICI used to take on about 40 or 50 young women and train them as secretaries. It gave them an excellent training in office technology which enabled them to launch themselves into all sorts of jobs in other companies. Gradually, because the cost of paying those young women increased, the scheme was abandoned. The company said, "Let the Government train them; they have made it too expensive for us." We have created a real dilemma for training youngsters.

My experience in small business tells me that training schemes such as YOPS, TOPS or one of the other flops that we have had over the years are not the answer. I do not know whether TECs will help to bridge the gap—perhaps they will to some extent. However, I have always pressed the point that a bright youngster can go to university, get a grant and be looked after by the state until his or her training is finished, but a young person who is practical, not academic, and who wants to train with the local plumber, butcher, baker, mechanic or whoever, is supposed to be able to get money and resources from the employer. Clearly, that is classist, sexist and biased in every possible way. I have always pressed on the Department that we should make available a grant, voucher or whatever for youngsters who are not academic but practical and want to train on the job in industry.

I am glad that the Government are now pushing a number of those schemes. I hope that they will be widely implemented so that any youngster leaving school will have the choice of going to university to be trained as a lawyer, accountant and so on—something that they can do in a college. The alternative, which is training on the job, should be treated with equal seriousness and youngsters should be able to claim a grant in exactly the same way as those who happen to be academic and go to university.

People with practical skills are just as important to our economy as those with academic or intellectual skills. I have often said that a city such as London would grind to a halt in a week if all the plumbers went on strike. We could probably manage for a couple of years without lawyers or accountants and nobody would notice the difference. People with practical skills are greatly undervalued. Giving them the same grant and help as we give academic young people going to university would help to give new status to those jobs.

I congratulate the Government on having embarked on that policy. I hope that they will continue to pursue it

along those lines. I hope that, when considering future employment policies, the Government will continue to bear in mind the attitude of the people who create jobs—employers. If we allow a structure of regulation and control and obligations and expense to build on the back of the employee, we will make many of the most needy, vulnerable, least skilled and, perhaps, the least bright less attractive to employers. I refer not to employers such as nationalised industries or large corporations, because they can cope and can help to spread the cost, but to small firms—the guys and the women—which employ two or three people. We must keep them in mind. I urge Opposition Members to look again at their policies in the light of the employer, in particular the small employer, if they really want to help people to get back into work.

12.9 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This has been an interesting debate, and I welcome the opportunity to participate in it. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) opened the debate by saying how well things were going in his constituency. Of course, I am pleased to hear that, but I must advise him that things are not the same everywhere, and certainly not in London. It is another world for those of us who live in and who represent London constituencies. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said, the problems of unemployment go wider than simply losing a job. A great many other problems can arise. Many people have to worry about whether they can keep their home and whether their marriage will survive. Sadly, we know that people who become unemployed run into enormous problems trying to keep their home and to maintain what, for many years, might have been a stable marriage.

Throughout the 32 London boroughs, many small businesses are being destroyed. Many have been developed over many years by a lot of hard work and by the people who were running them putting as much money as they could back into them, but all those years of effort are now being destroyed. In any shopping area in London—I am sure that this is true of many other parts of the country also—one can see shops shut and boarded up, which show no sign of reopening. That is what life is like in London, but, as I have said, I am sure that hon. Members who represent other parts of the country can tell the same story.

That has happened against the background of 12 years of Conservative government when the Government have had two of this country's greatest assets at their disposal, which should have ensured an on-going flourishing economy. The Government have had an abundance of money. I doubt whether any Government in our history have had similar financial resources available to them. However, the vast sums of money from North sea oil and from selling this country's state assets have, in the view of many people, been squandered.

The Minister wanted to know how recent were the figures that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East quoted about London. My first quotation comes from the London *Evening Standard* of Tuesday 26 November—this week. Under the headline "6,000 chasing 40 part-time Ford jobs", the article states:

"The stark reality of the recession in the South-east was brought home today when it emerged that 6,000 people are chasing 40 part-time manual jobs at Ford's biggest car plant . . . Among the avalanche of applicants for the 40 part-time posts offered by Ford are hundreds of letters from well-qualified former white collar employees who have lost their job since the recession began hammering London and and South-east."

Let us now look borough by borough at the unemployment figures for London. These figures come from a document published on 14 November this year, which shows that 16,000-plus people are out of work in Brent. The figure for Enfield is 11,000; for Haringey 17,000; for Croydon, 12,000; for Hounslow, 8,000; and for Newham, 16,000.

Those are just some of the boroughs. Hon. Members may think that I have been selective and given only the worst figures. But I could have quoted Hackney, which has 18,000 out of work, or Lambeth, which has over 22,000 people out of work. That is the position in London. In the borough for which I am one of the Members of Parliament —Wandsworth—we now have 14,700 out of work. We have the eighth highest unemployment of the 32 London boroughs.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has the third motion on the Order Paper, which we know will not be reached. He talked about the position in the Conservative-controlled borough of Wandsworth. It is a pity that we shall not reach his motion. If I had been called, I could have described the other side of the supposedly wonderful borough of Wandsworth. There is another, depressing side. The hon. Gentleman's motion does not contain any reference to employment. In fairness to him, he touched on both employment and unemployment.

The motion that we are debating says:

"this House welcomes the great progress that has been made in employment".

Such progress certainly has not been made in London or, indeed, in many other parts of Britain. The motion also refers to the European social action programme and a national minimum wage. I sometimes wonder what Conservative Members know about the social charter.

I am one of this Parliament's delegates to the Council of Europe and I sit on the social and health committee. We do not have an employment committee. The social and health committee deals with employment and welfare in general. It is composed of parliamentarians from various countries. The Council of Europe has 25 member states of all political persuasions. The delegates may be the equivalent of Labour, Conservative, Liberal or independent Members of Parliament. They represent Governments controlled by Conservatives, socialists or coalitions.

Delegates to the Council of Europe tell me and other British delegates that they look with utter dismay and disgust at the British Government's attitude to the social charter. When Conservative Members talk about the social charter, it appears that all that it proposes is a minimum wage. A minimum wage certainly figures in it, but the social charter covers many other matters and it would be interesting to know whether the Government support some of them. It deals with not just salaries but working conditions, safety regulations at work, opportunities for women and a range of other issues.

The British Institute of Management supports the proposals in the social charter. It recently sent out a document called "The European social dimension—the manager's view", which says:

"Managers welcome the principles of a Social Europe. Employees at all levels should be involved in the creation of wealth and share in the beneifts that flow from it. The United

[Mr. Tom Cox]

Kingdom government should recognise this and negotiate on the social dimension as a willing and constructive participant. In many areas, Britain leads Europe in the development of good management practice. We should turn the Social Charter to our advantage to spread best practice throughout Europe."

Mr. Forth: That is Government policy.

Mr. Cox: Well, well—a comment from the Minister. He and I have clashed before. So that is Government policy. It is not merely my hon. Friends and I who do not believe that that is Government policy: the Europeans do not believe it either.

I have never seen the Minister at a Council of Europe meeting. That is not a criticism, as I realise that certain Ministers go to certain meetings, either at the Council of Europe or at the European Parliament. However, if he is in doubt about what people believe, and if he wants to defend the Government's policy and his Department's policy, I will make the necessary request to the social and health committee for him to do so. He will not find it an easy ride—and not because of people like myself. I would not need to say anything. He could hear the comments about the Government's policies from other European parliamentarians on the social and health committee.

Training is another aspect of the motion. After 12 years of Tory government, I do not think that there is any doubt that we now have one of the worst training records of any industrial nation. The *Financial Times* on 31 October 1991 carried a report headed "Quarter of business report skill shortages", which said:

"Nearly a quarter of businesses reported skills shortages in the past year, according to government figures published yesterday.

Also the report, Training Statistics, shows that skills shortages over the year to May rose to 41 per cent in some high-technology sectors."

The Engineering Employers London Association sent me a letter on 22 November which says:

"The engineering industry is keen to play its full part in reviving the country's economic fortunes."

The association obviously does not think that our economic fortunes are so rosy, despite what we heard earlier. The letter continues:

"To do this it needs to work in practical and productive co-operation with government to ensure an adequate supply of well educated, trained and motivated people; to increase investment and industrial capacity; and to create and sustain conditions in which engineering can be competitive and innovative."

It would appear that that major organisation in London does not think too much of what the Government have been doing.

Hon. Members from both sides of the Chamber have spoken about things that we do have, such as TECs and local enterprise companies. Business people—whether from large or small businesses—complain bitterly about the system. They find it utterly confusing to work with, and they are certain that more companies will have to pay for training as financial help from the Government is reduced.

What does the electrical engineering installation industry have to say?

"The situation currently remains fluid with rumours of substantial reductions in Government support for Youth Training, the underlying implication being that it will be ultimately the employer's financial responsibility to meet the cost of training."

There are now 82 training and enterprise councils in England and Wales to deal locally with all training issues. All funding is now channelled through these bodies. The industry now has to negotiate separately with each of the 82 TECs, and each TEC determines the local needs and establishes the rate of financial support. Therefore, there are 82 different rates of financial support.

It would be interesting if, possibly, the Minister could pay a little attention. The industry continues:

"A trained electrician, with similar training costs across the country (from Cornwall to Northumberland), is valued differently from TEC to TEC, training support ranging from £15 to £50 per week."

That is the confusion which companies that most certainly want to play an active role in training their work force must deal with when working with the Government. That is why so many organisations are, rightly, complaining bitterly about what is happening.

The Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association, which represents another big industry throughout the United Kingdom, said of the Government's policies:

"Over the last two years the government has introduced so many different schemes . . . that it is sometimes regarded as not merely moving the goal posts but actually changing the game."

It goes on to say that the arrangements have produced

"a bureaucratic paper chase for industry, government and local organisations themselves. The reality is that government cannot deliver its training guarantees because it does not have a completely 'hands on' control of the new systems it has introduced."

The association says that the waste in human and financial resources argument has been rehearsed many times without any constructive response from the Government. It comments:

"Although college fees for the standard City and Guilds pipe fitting course"—

the association, by its very nature, would be involved in that—

"operated by the Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association through its own managing agency costs (apart from London) £31 per week, per student in the first year, each TEC provides a different level of funding."

For example, Northampton provides £10, Sheffield £56, Avon £26, Bury £22 and Manchester £30.

If the Government have this great commitment to training, how does the Minister expect a business to be committed when an association to which employers belong, just as workers belong to trade unions, says that this is a jungle of confusion in which they must try to operate? That is why, sadly, young people face the same difficulties as those of people of other ages. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) spoke about people in their 40s and 50s who have lost their jobs. If they live in depressed areas, they find it difficult to get retrained and obtain jobs which they hope will last for about 10 years. The young unemployed often face the same difficulties. That happens despite the fact that, during their period of office, the Government have had the advantages of the income from North sea oil and from the sale of our assets.

Britain has great skills, many good companies, and a good work force, but it lacks opportunity and confidence. Above all, there is a lack of Government support for the very people who want to help this country prosper and develop.

Europe offers us enormous opportunities, but we are being left on the sidelines. I am a member of the Council of Europe and treasurer of the British group on the Inter-Parliamentary Union. During the past year, we have

been greatly involved in central and eastern Europe helping emerging democracies to learn how our Parliament functions, but we do not discuss only parliamentary democracy. Next week, we are to have a visit by a parliamentary delegation from Hungary. Europeans always say to us, "Why do you British not become involved in our country?" The lack of meaningful commitment by the Government bedevils British industry and the people who try to run it.

Mr. Conway: All hon. Members appreciate that the hon. Gentleman plays a distinguished role in the Council of Europe and an even more distinguished role in the IPU. It does not matter whether the hon. Gentleman is being fair to the Government, but he is being less than fair to our country when he speaks about the part that we play in Europe. I am sure that, when the hon. Gentleman attends international meetings, he makes the point that the United Kingdom is a vital part of the European Community and has applied more directives than any of the other member states. We should not let people get away with saying that Britain is not playing its role. We are in there and doing more than any of the others, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman recognises.

Mr. Cox: I should like to support the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot. Hon. Members often disagree with their colleagues—that is what democracy is all about. The views are not mine but those of European parliamentarians.

Mr. Forth: They are wrong.

Mr. Cox: The Minister says that they are wrong, but the events of the past two or three weeks have been confusing and have not made it clear what the Prime Minister will or will not sign for.

The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham says that we are committed to Europe. He should read in today's issue of *The Daily Telegraph* a letter from 25 prospective Conservative parliamentary candidates who say, "Hold on, we don't really want anything much to do with Europe." That is the view of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, and he should bear it in mind when he reflects on what Europeans say about us and our attitude.

Within the next four or five months, we could be in an election campaign. The debate in that campaign will not only be about the attitude of the electorate to the national health service, to housing, to the absolute chaos in our transport system, to the reports only this week about education and about how parents have to contribute more and more money to educate their youngsters.

Apart from those issues, the voters will take an even stronger line over the total lack of policies in the last 12 years to lead Britain into developing a modern industrial base. That base is still lacking, despite all the opportunities, especially financial, that have been available to the Government. As soon as the electors are given a chance, they will indict the Government on all those matters.

12.35 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) in initiating a debate on employment policies. Although this is a vital matter, it is regrettable that the exposure of the Opposition green leather Benches is in excess of 99 per cent.

The motion includes the important issues of the strike record of the nation and a national minimum wage and I shall confine my remarks to those. In terms of strikes, we have made considerable progress. Last year we had the record lowest number of strikes for 56 years. We seem at last to have got away from the nonsense of class war and head bashing which so damaged our social and industrial structure.

The present situation has been due largely to the long-standing policies of the Conservatives over the past 12 years on reforms through industrial relations policy. Those reforms have been fundamental in handing back the trade unions to the members who pay the union subscriptions. People join trade unions only if they believe that they are relevant and worth the subscriptions involved. The reduction of millions in the membership of trade unions is perhaps a commentary on the position.

Trade union members have got back control of their unions by the balloting that has been made possible by Conservative legislation. They ballot for their leaders and when deciding whether to strike. There have been examples time and again of politically motivated union officials proposing strikes which their intelligent members have chucked out.

Legislation has also brought trade unions back within the law, limiting their unfair coercive powers. That is why, even during the current recession, the British economy has shown remarkable resilience. Proof that the economy remains effective is revealed by the figures for investment by foreign companies in the European Community. The Japanese have placed 40 per cent. of their investment in the United Kingdom, with the remaining 60 per cent. spread among the other 11 members of the EC. American investment in Britain is even higher, with 42 per cent. coming here and the other 11 struggling to obtain the rest. That shows the effectiveness of the British marketplace.

Thank goodness we have seen the end of the old knee-jerk reaction to industrial relations and strikes. Gone are the days of the political antics of the likes of Red Robbo. An example of the great days of Labour Government was the freelance journalist who, out of curiosity, ran through the docks in an old raincoat, waved his arms in the air and yelled, "All out, brothers", and the dockers came off the ships and sat around the dockside for the rest of the day. They thought that their union had instructed them to cease work, although they had no idea why. They acted in such an inefficient manner that they were not even responding to their union.

Those days have gone, but what a tragedy it would be if the Labour party were able to put back the clock. I wonder how many of our constituents know the policies that the Labour party currently advocates on trade unions. If a Labour Government came to office, they would legalise secondary strikes and flying pickets, limit the courts' power to sequestrate a union's assets and make unofficial, unballoted industrial action lawful. We do not want such legislation.

It is worth considering that Labour's active contribution to industrial relations in recent years has been equally negative. How many people remember that the Labour party supported the P and O seamen's strike in 1988, the dock workers' strike in 1989, the railway workers' strike in 1989, which caused such misery to my commuting constituents, and the ambulance men's strike in 1989? It supports such strikes because it is bound to its paymasters. However, the public is not given that impression.

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

The Leader of the Opposition, writing in the *Director* magazine, made an extraordinary claim in respect of the trade unions and the Labour party. He said:

"There isn't a dependent relationship of any kind".

That is not the view of Ron Todd, who explained only last August that the Labour party needs the trade unions' money and strength. But it fears and resents that power, as is shown by the Leader of the Opposition's comment.

We must not forget the reality—the Leader of the Opposition is sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union. He expressed his real views on the matter in a speech to a TGWU conference and they were reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 11 July this year. He said:

"in every region, in every industry, in every constituency, this union represents the Labour party. This union is the Labour Party in so many ways".

This country forgets that basic background at its peril.

The problem is that, for the Labour party, the matter is a one-way bet. Union restrictions and wrecking action equal higher unemployment. Higher unemployment equals party political advantage. Time and again, it appears that the Labour party wants higher unemployment. After the 1983 election, the Leader of the Opposition predicted that the new Conservative Government would create mass unemployment of 6 million people. Not to be outdone, Arthur Scargill trumped that figure with 8 million people. As so often happens with such predictions, the Labour party was disappointed when unemployment fell steadily for some years thereafter.

The syndrome of pressure from the Labour party would bring about higher unemployment, which would be reinforced by its highly damaging policy for a national minimum wage. A national minimum wage sounds nice and caring, but all academic studies based on realities and projections show otherwise. A former Labour party Employment Minister, Mr. John Grant, has looked into the matter in detail. In an article in *The Guardian* on 28 June this year, he recalled a study on the national minimum wage carried out for Barbara Castle in 1969 when she was Secretary of State for Employment. Mr. Grant recommended that the study should be dusted down, brought out and made

"compulsory reading for the Labour leader Neil Kinnock and his economic team as they flounder around in their quest for a presentable policy which tackles inflation."

Mr. Grant extrapolated from the 1969 report that,

"appropriately updated for inflation, a statutory wage today would add at least £1,000 million to the annual pay bill. To keep it to that level would imply remarkable restraint by higher paid workers."

We all know that such restraint would not be shown. He continued:

"There is only one context in which a statutory minimum wage makes sense for Labour—as part of an overall incomes policy."

We have been told time and again that there will be no overall incomes policy, despite the fact that when the Leader of the Opposition was a young Member in the early 1970s he favoured one. The Labour party has clocked up yet another U-turn.

What is the reaction of the trade union movement to the proposals for a national minimum wage? On 5 June this year, Gavin Laird of the Amalgamated Engineering Union stated on Channel 4:

"It's never worked in the past, there's no logic for it, it doesn't work in any other country and it certainly will not work in Great Britain."

We all remember the association that Joe Haines of the *Daily Mirror* had with the Labour party. He said:

"The minimum wage proposals won't work and if they do, won't help."

The Fabian Society, which is so close to the background of many Opposition spokesmen, has produced an analysis showing that up to 880,000 jobs could be destroyed by the minimum wage. Other academic studies have researched the matter in considerable detail. Their analyses show that if there were to be a Labour Government and they introduced a national minimum wage, the jobs cost would amount to 1·5 million in the first stage of that policy, with a minimum wage set at £3·40 an hour. When the second stage of that Labour policy was introduced, the loss of jobs would rise to 2 million.

The Labour party may advocate policies that inflame unemployment, particularly at the bottom end of the scale for the most vulnerable people, but the Conservative party does not. We should be concerned to improve skills and to allow people to retain their self-respect and win jobs—better and better-paid jobs—on the basis of their innate skills, complemented by the training that we support. That is why I welcome the wide range of measures introduced by the Government.

Britain is the only country to guarantee an offer of a place on a two-year youth training scheme for every 16 and 17-year-old. Under the last Labour Government there were only 6,000 such training places; today there are well over 250,000. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred to the employment training programme. Our employment training programme in this country is the largest in Europe. Job clubs deal sensitively with the unemployed, assisting them in the practicalities of getting back to work and half of those who leave job clubs go straight into jobs.

Training and enterprise councils provide an imaginative way to draw local industry into training to ensure that employment and youth training is tailored to the precise needs of local communities. I see my role as being supportive of the Kent TEC in my area rather than looking for teething problems about which to complain. I wish the TECs success in achieving practical steps which will deal with the problem of unemployment.

12.50 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This has been an interesting debate. I place on record my admiration for the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) for choosing to table a motion on employment, given that over the past 12 months, unemployment in his constituency has increased by 50 per cent. We know that that 50 per cent. increase in unemployment represents considerable human misery for those of his constituents who now find themselves out of work. It is a little sad that, as Conservative Members have spoken, one after the other has shown almost no recognition of the human costs of the total failure of the Government's employment policies over almost 13 years.

It may be helpful to examine the state of the labour market as we move into the Prime Minister's second year of office and into the 14th year of a Conservative Government. Although it suits Conservative Members, such as the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), to

try to re-run the battles of the 1970s, those are not the battles that the British public want to fight. The public want an agenda that faces the 1990s and the problem of mass unemployment, with which the Government have now dabbled twice. The Government have unashamedly used unemployment as an arm of social and economic policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) commented that the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that unemployment was a price worth paying. There have been no apologies to my constituents, to those of my hon. Friends or to those of Conservative Members for the huge human suffering which the policy has caused. There has not been an increase in unemployment in my constituency on the scale that exists in Shrewsbury and Atcham. The reason is not that there has been less unemployment, but that unemployment has been outrageously high in inner-city Manchester throughout every year in which the Government have been in power.

Unemployment has caused poverty and pressures on families, which lead to their breaking up. Unemployment has led directly to the associated problem of crime, to the problem of drug abuse and to the problem of drug sales in which crime is involved. It has led to women working in prostitution.

Those are the realities of the policies of unemployment which the Government accept as "a price worth paying". Those social consequences are so stark and alarming that they are dividing British society down the middle. Those who are lucky enough still to be in work are no longer secure, but at least they can count the blessings of being in work. They are divided from those who are thrust into unemployment and who struggle to make ends meet.

We know that, even among the working population, one of the greatest growth areas has been the increase in part-time work, and the associated growth of poverty wages and financial difficulties. Home working has risen to an extent that we never knew in the past, and it has caused some outrageous employment conditions, yet not one word of apology for the damage that they have done comes from Conservative Members.

Over the past 12 months, unemployment has risen to 2·5 million. Using the basis that applied in the late 1970s, more accurate figures would show that, once again, we are above the 3 million mark for those out of work. The numbers of those in long-term unemployment have increased to more than 650,000—an increase in one year of 50 per cent.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East pointed out, the chances of those 650,000 people obtaining a decent training scheme, whether as part of employment training or elsewhere, are virtually non-existent. There have been cuts in ET from the heady days when we were promised 600,000 places a year to the present, when the numbers on ET courses have been cut. Last year, ET starts were more than 200,000; by March this year, ET starts were down to 197,000. There are 197,000 employment training places for 650,000 long-term unemployed people—the casualties of the Chancellor's economic doctrines and ideologies.

In the construction industry, which has already been hammered by unemployment, another 100,000 people have been thrown on to the dole queues. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) said that she had benefited from talking to taxi drivers about the growth in self-employment. I must tell her about the self-employed taxi driver who drove me recently. He told me how bitterly he regretted having to do such work, because he was a skilled construction worker who had been thrown out of work and denied the opportunity of earning the living that he wanted to earn in a trade that he valued. He could have been helping to build the homes, schools and hospitals that the country so badly needs. Such are the results of the Chancellor's policies.

Manufacturing industry, which was so brutally hit by the Government in the early 1980s, has shed another 300,000 jobs. The service industries, which we were once told would be the salvation of the country, have shed 150,000 jobs over the past 12 months. The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) used to insist that manufacturing had no future and that service industries would drag the country into a brave new future.

Conservative Members once thought that they could contemptuously treat the south-east as their own, as they damaged employment in the north and in other parts of Britain. But now unemployment in the south-east has grown by a dramatic 109 per cent. in the past 12 months —making it the worst affected region in the land.

That is the reality of the modern labour market in Britain—an economy increasingly dominated by people either out of work or under-employed and by outrageous and unacceptable working practices. I hope that the figures I am about to reveal will shock Conservative Members.

Conservatives talk about days lost through industrial action, but I ask them to compare with that figure the number of days lost through directly preventable industrial injuries, accidents and illnesses. Every year, about 60 million working days are lost through preventable accidents and ill health. By underfunding the Health and Safety Executive and the mechanisms for protecting people at work, the Government guarantee that that figure will continue to be a running sore on the back of the British economy.

Mr. Forth: I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will forgive the ritualistic element that enters such debates from time to time. The hon. Gentleman yet again trots out the tired old charge about underfunding the Health and Safety Executive. With as much enthusiasm as I can muster at this stage in the debate, I remind him and the House yet again that the Health and Safety Executive gets the resources it asks for to do its job and that the Government have confidence in its performance. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Health and Safety Executive is not doing its job, or is he making an explicit pledge for more funds for it should he ever be in government? I would appreciate it if he made that clear to the House now.

Mr. Lloyd: I make it clear that the Labour Government will make available the resources that the Health and Safety Executive needs to do its job. That is a commitment which the Minister can read, if he cares to do so, in existing documentation.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, not at the moment.

I have tabled questions asking the Minister to explain the recruitment ban that the Health and Safety Executive impose on further employment last year. The ban was caused by lack of funding, yet the Minister has said in

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parliamentary answers that no such ban existed. I have a letter from the Health and Safety Executive making it clear to the relevant trade unions that such a ban existed. Is the Minister prepared to explain how he has misled the House of Commons?

Mr. Forth: If the hon. Gentleman is prepared to let me have a copy of the letter that he alleges he has received from the Health and Safety Executive—and if its contents are as he alleges—I shall look at it carefully and, if any withdrawal or retraction on my part is necessary, I will give it.

Mr. Lloyd: We can certainly arrange that. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that he will come to the House to make such a retraction, because it is a serious charge.

Mr. Forth *indicated assent.*

Mr. Lloyd: I welcome that commitment.

I must reiterate the charge that 60 million days are lost in British industry every year. It is calculated that that loss is avoidable, but the Government are simply not prepared to take the necessary steps to prevent it.

We have also lost a staggering 4 billion days as a result of the increase in unemployment since the Government came to power. The amount of money lost to the economy —some £400 billion—is so enormous as to dwarf revenue from North sea oil and all the other benefits to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred. The Government have squandered the future of the British people and the British economy in pursuit of their policies of high unemployment.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Has the hon. Gentleman compared the number of days lost through unemployment since the Government came to office with the number of days gained through employment since the Government came to office?

Mr. Lloyd: The days lost through unemployment are the days that the economy forgoes; for the purpose of deciding at what level the economy could be operated, that is the significant figure. Any other figure has no relevance at all—except to massage the hon. Gentleman's own prejudices.

We are aware of changes in the nature of the labour market and I shall deal with that in referring to the challenges that we ought to face. There is an alternative agenda for Britain. We shall not hear it from the Minister this morning and, so far, we have certainly not heard it from his hon. Friends, with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Billericay, who briefly referred to the kind of labour market that we should have in Britain.

How are we to turn away from this destructive Government's capacity to view Britain's future as that of a low-wage, low-cost producing nation, and turn our economy instead into a highly skilled, high-technology, high-performance economy? There are a number of prerequisites for that, and the first is training. Whatever set of standards one applies, the British work force is undertrained. Training provision in Britain bears scant comparison with that in countries throughout the rest of western Europe, as well as that in Japan and the United States. We know, for example, that we lag way, way behind other OECD countries when it comes to young people going into full-time education and training.

Only about 30 per cent. of people in the British labour force have any qualification—a figure which compares very badly with those of other western European countries. The Secretary of State for Employment lost the battle at the time of the autumn statement this year. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury worsted him and made it clear that money would not be made available for training. As a result, money for youth training places has been cut by £25 million and those who Conservative Members say represent the future of our country—on that, at least, they are quite right—are to lose training opportunities. On employment training, the Secretary of State lost the battle to the tune of £105 million.

The commitment from the Labour party is clear. We shall reverse those cuts in training. We must do so, because, without a proper effort to ensure that training becomes a priority, we shall simply doom Britain to the same sorry cycle of low-pay, low-cost production.

Given that, in a slump, one business in four operates with a skill shortage, it is clear that the Government have the training relationship fundamentally wrong. That is why a Labour Government will introduce a training levy. We shall ensure that those employers who are already facing up to their training obligations will be rewarded for doing so, by preventing undercutting and unfair competition from employers who are not prepared to train. That will have a significant effect on ensuring that there is a level playing field so that the good employer does not face unfair competition from the bad employer.

Mr. Conway: Has the hon. Gentleman costed the impact that that will have on businesses and the consequent effect on jobs? Is he not contradicting a statement from the Opposition Treasury team, who have said that they will give a costed commitment only to pensions and maternity benefits? The House needs to know the figures, so that we can understand precisely what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman should do his research. Labour's position has been clear for some time. We will introduce a training levy which will be funded by the employer on the basis of payroll——

Mr. Jacques Arnold: By how much?

Mr. Lloyd: Half a per cent. of the payroll—and that will be used to fund training. That is a legitimate activity, which is pursued in many other countries. It is pursued at a high level in France, where it is successful. French training is better and more successful than ours. We aim to ensure that the British work force is the best trained work force in the world. Without that kind of training commitment, we doom Britain to having no future in terms of competition with the rest of western Europe.

Britain has a very poor record with regard to the number of women in the labour force. Between 1979 and 1991, the rate of increase of women's pay relative to men's has been so slow that, if we simply continue at the same rate, it will be 50 years before women's pay reaches parity with men's.

The Minister should bear in mind the fact that my four-year-old daughter, who will be entering school next year, will be thinking of retirement before her pay reaches

parity with that of men if she has to wait for this Government and their voluntaristic approach. She and I are simply nor prepared to wait for that.

Mr. Forth: In that case, why is the proportion of women working in the United Kingdom one of the highest in Europe? If the deal is so awful, why do so many women come forward of their own volition to take up what is on offer on the job market?

Mr. Lloyd: That is a fair question. Like the hon. Member for Billericay, I welcome the role of women in the labour force—unlike some Conservative Members, the stuffed-shirt neanderthals, who have a rather different view of women's role in society.

With regard to family finances, the Family Policy Studies Centre stated that the wages of working mothers are increasingly saving families from the breadline. It found:

> "Ten per cent. of families where the mother has no job live on less than £100 a week, compared with fewer than one in a hundred families with dependent children where the mother does work."

We have become a two-wage economy: families cannot survive unless there are two wages. Women are forced into work to make ends meet and to allow their families to exist. Poverty wages disfigure the role of both women and men in employment.

Women in British industry are underpaid relative to men to the tune of £21 billion a year because of the unfair pay rates. Women are locked into a limited number of industrial structures and are offered limited career options, and we have the worst publicly funded child care facilities in western Europe.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The hon. Gentleman's speech seems to be a long catalogue of running down Britain. He is suggesting that we are the worst-off in Europe. Time and again, hon. Members in this debate have highlighted a variety of areas in which we are well ahead in comparison with Europe. It does not help the debate simply to run down this country because we happen to have a Conservative Government.

Mr. Lloyd: Unfortunately, I have a different kind of patriotism to the hon. Gentleman's. My patriotism lies with the people I represent, including the women who cannot find adequate child care facilities for their children because they do not exist, and the women who would like to work full-time because they need to support their families. However, they have to work part time or not at all and they depend on benefits because there are no child care facilities. The hon. Gentleman can dance, scream and prance all he likes, but he will not change the reality that we have very poor child care facilities. He should put pressure on the Minister to make sure that we improve the matter or, perhaps better, vote for a Labour candidate at the general election, to make sure that we have a Government who will introduce child care services.

If we really are to alter the role of women in the labour force, we must do something, as the Equal Opportunities Commission pointed out in its document entitled "The Equality Agenda". I am sure that the Minister has read it. The commission makes it clear that one of the significant deterrents to women properly entering the labour market and competing equally with men is the inflexible and inadequate training on offer.

We know, for example, that employment training, a source of training for women returners, has been cut. We must make resources available to give women returners the training that is necessary if we are to liberate the potential of women in Britain. We know that 90 per cent. of new entrants into the labour force between now and the turn of the century will be women. Many of them will be women returning to the labour market, or perhaps coming in not straight from school but for the first time, without adequate training. We not only condemn them to lousy work and low pay: we condemn the economy to under-perform, and we condemn society to an unacceptable long-term future of a kind that simply should not be on offer in the last part of the 20th century.

We know that we will not get that change from the Government. We know that the Government have blocked the directive on pregnant women.

Mr. Forth: What?

Mr. Lloyd: The directive has now been grossly amended. The Minister may want to announce what it now contains, because we have had no official announcement.

Mr. Forth: In the interests of honesty and truthfulness, I must ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the form of words that he used—that the Government "blocked" the directive on pregnant women. He must know, because we told him and everybody else at the time, that the directive on pregnant women went through the Council of Ministers on the European Community a few weeks ago, with only the Italians voting against. How he can square that with what he has said, I really do not know.

Mr. Lloyd: If the Minister cares to read my remarks in *Hansard*, he will have to consider the absolute truth. The Government were part of the process of blocking the directive until it was so badly mauled that it is now very different from the one that we first saw and debated in the House a month ago.

Mr. Leighton: Is it not the case that the Minister—perhaps he will confirm this—abstained to allow through an emasculated formula which gave pregnant women in this country the equivalent of sick pay? Not many of us think that women producing babies are suffering from an illness. We think that that is insulting and humiliating.

Mr. Lloyd: I can confirm that that is exactly what happened. It certainly is not pregnant women who are sick—the Government have that problem. We are intent on making sure that British women, even if no longer with the protection of the directive, have adequate protection during pregnancy.

We know that the Government have blocked the directive on part-time workers, which would have helped many women in Britain. We know that the Government have a record on child care. This Government in particular took away tax relief on workplace nurseries. Even from his hon. Friends, the Minister has received a request to consider that matter again.

The women of Britain—the women in the work force and those who want to be in the work force—will not look to the Minister to offer them any hope of liberation or any hope of a better future. They will rightly look to a Labour Government who will not look at the matter in the narrow

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economic calculus that we have heard from Conservative Members but will recognise that, unless we are prepared to accept the role of women in the labour force, we will fail as an economy to receive and achieve our full potential.

The minimum wage seems to exercise Conservative Members to the greatest extent. The Government try to justify their claims about a minimum wage on the grounds of what it might to do employment, so it is worth spending a little time on the reasons why we shall insist on introducing it, and the rationale behind that.

The Select Committee on Employment recently produced a very good report on home workers, which revealed that many earn as little as 20p or 30p an hour for making up Christmas crackers. Some receive wage rates of £1 for sewing blouses, skirts and dresses. Some receive 20p or 30p an hour for packing cards and others 80p or 90p an hour for painting table mats.

I hope that the Minister will comment specifically on whether that is an acceptable employment practice for this country or whether he believes—as I most certainly do—that we should offer some form of legal protection for those women are the most exploited. I also hope that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) will reconsider his unyouthful radicalism in that context, because surely nobody can justify pay rates of 20p an hour. Such women—home workers are almost exclusively women—are entitled to some statutory support, but they are most definitely not getting that support from this Government, with or without the wages councils.

The same report examined individual cases. We are not prepared to accept the fact that women, such as one woman from my own city of Manchester, can make skirts, blouses and trousers and be paid as little as 25p per pair of trousers. That women was not offered a contract of employment or a payment slip, and does not know whether she is an employee or self-employed. Each item takes between 30 and 40 minutes to complete now, but took as long as one hour during her training period. Her employment conditions are atrocious. Her health and safety provisions are non-existent. The protection that she is offered is so grossly inadequate that the Minister should be ashamed that he has done nothing about it. Such people deserve legal protection. They deserve a role in our society that gives them a little more economic security and social dignity than is offered by the current outrageous employment practices.

We know that many people in Britain who are on poverty wages, even if they are in more regular forms of work, simply cannot make ends meet. The "Breadline Britain" report quotes the words of a Liverpool housewife in a low-wage family. Talking about the reality of living on poverty wages, she said:

"The children, mainly, don't get enough to eat; things they need when they need them, like the shoes and the clothes. I just wish we could do the things we want without having to worry where the money is coming from."

When a mother is forced to deprive her children of food, clothing and shoes, the Minister must explain the employment policies and successes of the Government, because we have yet to hear them. We know that roughly 10 million people in Britain today cannot afford adequate housing; that 7 million people go without essential clothing, such as a warm, waterproof coat for the winter, and that about 2·5 million children are growing up in families that go without the essential things in life, such as three meals a day, toys and out-of-school activities. The list could go on and on. When we know that poverty is one of the biggest growth industries in Britain, we know that the Government simply are not working—at least not in the interests of all our people.

About 4 million people would gain from the minimum wage that the Labour Government would introduce. If the Minister has not heard it before, this is another commitment for him—4 million people would gain. Half of them would gain at least £10 a week and another quarter at least £20 a week. About 40 per cent. of Britain's adult women part-time workers would benefit from Labour's proposal for a minimum wage.

We are not running away from the moral and social justification for introducing that minimum wage, because it is an outrage in our society that no such thing exists. It is an interesting curiousity that the nearest thing that we have to a minimum wage was introduced by Winston Churchill that one-time Conservative Prime Minister, in an earlier political guise. That fact is of great fascination to Labour Members whose view of Winston Churchill might otherwise be differently coloured.

We know that more than 10 million people in Britain are low paid according to the Council of Europe's decency threshold. The gap between the top 20 per cent. and the bottom 20 per cent. of men working full-time has never been wider in the past 100 years than it is today. One million people in work claim means-tested benefits. For all the reasons that I have given, we are determined to introduce a minimum wage that will offer decent protection to decent people whom I, my hon. Friends and, indeed, Conservative Members represent.

We hear scaremongering that a minimum wage will destroy jobs. We heard the same thing when the Labour Government introduced the Equal Pay Act 1970. Conservative Members and their predecessors came out with the same sorry story that paying women acceptable wages equal to men's wages would destroy jobs. It did not happen. Instead, there was a steady growth in the number of women in employment in Britain. Empirical studies of what happened when a minimum wage was introduced in France show that it did not destroy the economic base of France.

Mr. Forth: Wrong.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister can refer to the definitive report prepared for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development by Martin and Bazen, which made it clear that there was no loss of jobs among adult workers and no evidence of loss of jobs among youth workers.

Empirical models give a different tale from the hysterical claims of the Secretary of State for Employment. He started by claiming that a statutory minimum wage would result in three quarters of a million jobs losses. Then, perhaps a little frightened by his own rhetoric but thinking that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, he increased the figure to 1 million. Then, in a fit of excess, he ratcheted it up to a full 2 million job losses.

Everyone who has examined the issue with any professional respectability thinks that the Secretary of State is simply off his head. Having lost out to the Treasury on training, lost face with the British public by failing to recreate a climate of industrial expansion and lost out

politically to his colleagues in Cabinet, he is in need of a political success. He hoped that he would have such a success on the minimum wage. He simply will not achieve it, because the British public share the view of the Labour party that social decency and economic efficiency are assisted by a minimum wage which gives all our people a long-term secure role for them in the labour market.

This has been an interesting debate, because there is such a sharp contrast between Opposition Members and those who support the Government in their view of the future of Britain. Conservative Members see Britain as a low-pay, low-cost centre of production. They see our future as merely an offshore island for foreign investment which guarantees some tenuous future in the European Community.

Opposition Members believe that the British people have the basic talents and abilities which, with investment in their skills and a programme committed to training, will allow us to map out a better, more secure and more dignified future not for only those already in work but for the many people who will join the labour market in years to come. It will not be long before the Minister will be able to continue his ideological rantings, but this time he will do so from not the security of the Department of Employment but from the Front or Back Benches of a Conservative Opposition.

1.22 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), if congratulating is the correct expression. I often wonder whether being successful in the ballot is a matter for congratulation or commiseration. I suspect that in many cases—and perhaps in that of my hon. Friend because, as he said, he has a severe cold—it is a matter for commiseration.

My hon. Friend has chosen a particularly important subject for today's debate, and I congratulate him on that. We have had a most interesting debate, in which several hon. Members have taken part. I do not want to take too long, but I should like to refer to some of the points made by the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). He suggested that I should visit my local training and enterprise council, the London East TEC. As it happens, I was there only last Friday. This debate is an opportunity for me to pay tribute, as he did, to the excellent management skills and work of Iain MacKinnon and his task force. They do valuable work and are led by a good group of people.

I disagree with the impression of London East TEC that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East gave. Far from bumping along on the bottom, desperate for money, it is in good heart. The deputy chief executive of London East TEC wrote in an article:

"LETEC is proving to be an essential catalyst to the economic rejuvenation of the London East area. We are not just watching from the sidelines, but rather are rolling our sleeves up and getting involved not just in getting local people back into work, but in keeping them there. The young people of the London east area will have enormous opportunities in the future. We must ensure that they are equipped to grasp them."

I was heartened to see that one of the slogans on London East TEC's letterhead is:

"Our vision is that by the year 2000, the East side of London should be as prosperous as the West side"—

that seems to be an excellent vision for London East TEC. It continues:

"Our mission is to help local people and local businesses to share fully in that new prosperity."

The TEC is well equipped to achieve precisely those aims and that is something which we very much hope to see.

Mr. Leighton: I am pleased that, like me, the hon. Gentleman is liaising closely with London East TEC. It may have told him that although 2 per cent. of the country's population is in its area it receives only 1 per cent. of the expenditure on TEC programmes. I hope that he will help to rectify that situation.

In the documents that the hon. Gentleman is quoting from, did he notice the statement that unemployment in the TEC area has risen by 81 per cent. since March 1990, by 57 per cent. since November 1990 and that the highest rise was in Waltham Forest—is his own constituency, I believe—where it rose by 6·5 per cent.?

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I say that he has the same problem with me that I have with the Whips Office. Sometimes they confuse me with the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson)—I am the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, and unemployment in my constituency has not risen to quite the extent that he suggests.

I was quoting a different document from the leaflet that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East has. It says:

"On Monday 7 October LETEC hosted the national press launch for the new Employment Action programme. The launch was headed by the Secretary of State for Employment. LETEC requested 1,000 places but were allocated 800. We were of course disappointed. None-the-less, we are determined to fill those places by the New Year and then go back to the Department of Employment for more."

London East TEC is obviously not getting everything that it would like, and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East and I will be pressing for more spending to cure the ills of unemployment in our area. We both work for our area in different ways with our different policies.

London East TEC is doing an extremely good job. For example, it is taking steps to discover what local employers and businesses need and want from their employees. One example is the recent survey of 1,500 local business people. LETEC is using the information acquired in that survey, along with other research information to develop its training and enterprise support initiatives.

During the next few months and years, we must avoid continuing in the trap that we were in before. When this bout of unemployment is over, or when unemployment is declining, we must avoid children leaving school with no idea of the skills that they will need to work properly in the jobs that they will want, and in the jobs that will be available. Education has to be the key to that.

I welcomed the computer initiative in schools, which has brought so much innovation to our schools, from the primary age up. Last night I visited the Queen Mary and Westfield college in the Mile End road and I was told that it was soon to have a level of computers of almost one work station for every six students. That is most impressive. One of the problems that the college told me about is that school children are leaving school with more computer literacy than the university teachers, so university teachers are having to run hard simply to keep up with the people they are teaching.

There is always a problem with education providing for skills in information technology. It has always been

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noticed that information technology skills, of which we shall need more and more in the coming years, have tended to lag behind the demand for those skills. Perhaps it is not surprising, because those demands change so much and so often.

To return to some of the initiatives London East TEC has introduced, it has set up a series of education and business partnerships. Employers now come to schools and colleges to talk about what they need from their employees, and pupils go to their potential future work places and gain considerable valuable work experience. Another plan is to help a minimum of 10 local students find a job with companies in east London before those students go on to university or a polytechnic. The scheme is called Year in Industry and it is operated by Top Business Links—a company which helps businesses to communicate with schools. Obviously, that is extremely valuable. It improves the experience of the students themselves and the businesses' experience of the type of people coming out of the schools. It provides links between businesses and students so that students know what the businesses need and the businesses know how they can influence the schools. A year of a different sort of experience before university or polytechnic is valuable. It builds a sort of dedication, a work ethic, which is valuable at a university or a polytechnic.

Part of today's debate has been about an increase in unemployment which has hit this country like so many others. It is good news that the increase in unemployment in this country last month was the lowest for almost a year. I hope that that means that the trend is that we shall plateau soon and thereafter we shall see unemployment reducing. If that is true, as I hope it is, it may well be that the long-term trend of unemployment, which has seen troughs and peaks rising over the past 30 or 40 years with every trough and every peak getting higher, will turn round so that the peak of unemployment will be considerably lower than the last peak of unemployment.

The hon. Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Newham, North-East gave a telling and effective account of what happens during unemployment—of the destructive, demoralising and damaging effect on individuals who are unemployed. Of course they were both right. We must never dismiss the problem of unemployment as unimportant. The fear of unemployment is hitting everywhere, particularly in the south-east. It is hitting even my constituency in a way it has not done for many years.

What follows from that is that the last thing we should do is to introduce policies that are almost specifically designed simply to increase unemployment. We must not impose minimum wages on businesses, whether or not they can afford them. The hon. Member for Stretford said that 4 million people would gain from the imposition of a minimum wage. He is assuming that all those people now paid below what his party would bring in as a minimum wage would keep their jobs. The opposite would be the case. Many businesses would be unable to afford people at a higher rate. In any event, the Labour party's suggestion of a minimum wage is in itself rather obscure and bizarre. As I understand it, it is tied to the average and would therefore not only be relatively high at £3·40 but would increase as the average wage itself increased. With each increase in the average rate of pay, the minimum wage itself would have to go up and it would be for ever chasing its own tail.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. It will be tied to the median, which is not the same as the average. It is simply a mid-point on the range and would not be affected by changes in the minimum wage.

Mr. Arbuthnot: From what I understand, even an amount tied to the median would be affected because if the lowest wage were increased to £3·40 per hour, the median would have to rise.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I shall put the matter in simple terms. The median, the mid-point in a series of numbers such as 2,2,5,6 and 7, is defined as being the difference between 2 and 7, which is 3·5. If we alter the figures 2 and 2 to 3·5, the middle figure of 5 would remain unaltered because it is independent of the bottom figures.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's mathematics and I slightly doubt whether he does.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I am extremely confused. I studied mathematics for some years at school and I have not totally forgotten all of them. The median is not the mid-point between the first number and the last. It is where the largest number of items in a sample comes to, whereas the average is obviously the sample multiplied by the number of items. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) is obviously extremely confused. The median has a precise mathematical definition which is absolutely right, and my hon. Friend is correct in saying that the median is bound to alter if the number at the bottom of the scale is changed. That will alter the average as well in a different way, but it is bound to alter the median. Perhaps the hon. Member for Stretford wishes to define median in a non-mathematical sense.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for sorting out at least the hon. Gentleman's mathematics with obvious skill and knowledge.

Another aspect of the policies that Labour is pledged to implement and which would only increase the damaging effects of unemployment is the imposition of high taxes. It would impose taxes on business and individuals which would discourage enterprise and discourage people from trying to work hard. It would discourage profit and perhaps take us back to that nadir of Labour party policy when Shirley Williams was able to say with some pride that profit levels were the lowest they had been for years.

As the hon. Member for Stretford said, Labour would impose a training levy of 0·5 per cent. of the payroll. That is nothing more or less than a direct payroll tax on jobs. It is like the selective employment tax that a Labour Government introduced many years ago. Every Labour Government, except one, since 1929, has doubled unemployment, and the exception increased unemployment by only 50 per cent. Therefore, it was not surprising that when I intervened on the hon. Member for Newham, North-East he was a little coy about referring to his party's record on unemployment.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East made an interesting speech. He put forward the proposition that adherence to the exchange rate mechanism is what causes

unemployment in socialist France and socialist Spain. But adherence to the exchange rate mechanism is one of the policies not only of the Conservative party but of the Labour party. While the hon. Gentleman's speech was interesting if idiosyncratic, he appears to join us in condemning the employment policies of the Labour party.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman says that a training levy is the same as a selective employment tax. How could he be so confused? The previous selective employment tax went to the Treasury. If a firm spends 0·5 per cent. on training, it does not pay the tax. We have heard that Nissan is spending about 15 per cent. of its payroll on training, and it is an extremely successful company. All successful companies spend much more than 0·5 per cent. on training. The only criticism one might make of the Labour party's proposal is that it is not large enough. So the hon. Gentleman should not get nervous about 0·5 per cent. of payroll being spent on training. If he really supports the work of the east London TEC, he should not be saying that firms should not spend 0·5 per cent. on training.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My answer to that long intervention is that I did not say that a payroll tax was the same as the selective employment tax. I said that the payroll levy that the Labour party would introduce would have the effect of being a tax on jobs, in precisely the way that the selective employment tax had the effect of being directly a tax on jobs. They are both ways of discouraging firms from taking additional people on to their payrolls.

I applaud Nissan for having a high training budget, but decisions of that type must be taken by companies. The Government can encourage firms to train more, but for the Government to impose taxes on companies to insist that they train more does not take into account the effects, demands and needs of different industries. People who see that high training encourages success, as obviously it does for Nissan, will follow the designs and needs of the marketplace and will themselves introduce high training. Levies on the payroll will not have that effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) made the sort of eloquent and well-informed speech that we have come to expect from him every time. He had trouble with one phrase, when he referred to the "genuine crocodile tears" of Labour Members.

Mr. Leighton: It was a bogus sham.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman suggests that it was a bogus sham. I think that my hon. Friend had difficulty with the phrase because of the girations of Labour policy on so many issues. Its policy on Europe could best be described as jerking from one extreme to another within a few years, at one moment leaving the European Community altogether and in the next being willing to sign up to anything for which the EC asks; at one moment supporting the closed shop and in the next denigrating it. The problem is that the Labour party dodges all the important European issues because its conversion to the EC is not so much skin deep as ruled purely by expediency.

Labour believes that it can hijack the EC towards the type of socialism that has been rejected throughout eastern Europe. In socialist France, unemployment is now higher than it has ever been in that country's history. Unemployment is rising in every European country except in Spain, but there it is twice as high as it is in Britain. In France and Spain——

Mr. Leighton: What about Germany?

Mr. Arbuthnot: —the national minimum wage of the type presented by the Labour party is one of the causes of their unemployment. The Minister will no doubt refer to the OECD report, which appears to have been dismissed by the hon. Gentleman.

In every EFTA and G7 country, unemployment is higher than it was a year ago. Unemployment is a consequence of various factors—of inflation and world recession—and not something that we can escape. We could make it worse by insisting on the sort of minimum conditions put forward by the Labour party, conditions that would disadvantage the very people whom Labour says they are designed to protect.

1.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): This has been a good debate, as Friday debates often are. I thank and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) for giving the House an opportunity to cover this important ground. It has elicited a number of interesting points on which we would do well to reflect. It may be significant that, as I have sat here throughout the debate, riveted as ever to the contributions that have been made, I have noticed no more than three Labour Members present at any point. At one time, a Liberal Member was present. That does not suggest the outrage that a perusal of *Hansard* might beguile readers into expecting. It is important to put that fully into context.

A good aspect of the debate, especially on this side of the House, has been the positive attitude towards the training and enterprise councils. Whether that attitude is as positive among Opposition Members remains to be seen. My hon. Friends well appreciate the nature of the role of the TECs. It has been a radical step for the Government to hand over large parts of the policies which, until now, have been centrally determined. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) seems to want everything to be centrally determined and his speech reflected the dying echoes of the old-style centralised Labour party that we all knew and, at one stage, loved in our way. We need to hear more about the Labour party's current attitude to TECs.

TECs are a vital part of the delivery of modern policies in a modern society. The fact that business men have volunteered to give up their time and expertise to TECs is a major new breakthrough in the delivery of policies at local level. We recognise the vital importance of policies being tailored to local needs. Handing them over to people outside government who know their local community has been a quantum leap in the delivery of Government policies in the important areas of training and skills.

For Opposition Members to paint a negative picture of TECs failing to do what they have been set up to do is not good enough, because, after all, they have been in existence for only two years. That is made worse by the fact that the network of London TECs has, in some cases, been in existence literally only for weeks. I should like hon. Members to give TECs not only their support but the time

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to develop their approach locally to see whether they can meet the high expectations that understandably now exist. They will certainly have the fullest support of my Department and the Government in that and I hope that they will have the fullest support of Opposition Members, too, although that has not come through in this debate. Perhaps we shall hear more about that once Opposition Members have reflected on the important role of TECs.

May I put some of the comments that have been made into a broader context. Disgraceful accusations were made by Opposition Members, including, I regret to say, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), from whom I expected better. He suggested that the Government were engineering or conniving at a high level of unemployment. Such a suggestion is unworthy of the hon. Gentleman. How is it that, when this country has been going through a recession, which has been shared by countries throughout the world—not least the United States—our unemployment figures are lower than those of many other countries? For example, I had the privilege of visiting Australia last week, when I met a good friend of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East. Australia has had a Labour Government for some time, but unemployment there is higher than in the United Kingdom. Socialist France has higher unemployment than the United Kingdom and unemployment in socialist Spain is at least 50 per cent. higher than in this country. Those examples show, by clear implication, that those other Governments, who call themselves socialist and pursue policies similar to those which the Opposition would like to pursue, all have the same result. Yet we are accused of engineering high unemployment. The Opposition cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Nor can the Minister. Does he dissent from the Chancellor's comment that unemployment is a price worth paying? How is it that 80 per cent. of the increase in unemployment in western Europe has been in Britain?

Mr. Forth: It is easy to answer the last question. It is because until recently this country had one of the lowest levels of unemployment in Europe, so the increase here has, regrettably, been greater. The hon. Gentleman's mathematical skills are letting him down today—perhaps I should not go too deeply into that in case we get into a tangle. However, it is important for us all to keep the matter in context.

There has been a recession; the Government have had to deal with the consequences and have implemented the policies necessary to help the unemployed. I hope that Opposition Members do not believe that Conservative Members neither understand nor care about the personal circumstances of those who, tragically, have lost their jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There should be some recognition of the fact that the programmes that the Government have set up in the network of jobcentres, including restart, job clubs, job interview guarantees and all the programmes that they deliver through jobcentres or training and enterprise councils, help to alleviate the misery that comes with loss of employment. The fact that, even now, 50 per cent. of people who lose their jobs are back in work within three months is encouraging. That the long-term unemployment figures are much lower than they were bears testimony to the fact that many of our pledges and the policies that we have implemented are having a positive effect on the ground in relation to the individuals about whom Opposition Members spoke with such understandable feeling and passion.

Having made those general comments, I shall now address specific matters raised in the debate by Opposition Members. I turn first to my opposite number, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), who made some interesting statements, not least that relating to his spending commitments. His comments were useful because they provide us all with the opportunity to see what the Opposition have in mind and the approach that they will take in the run-up to the next election and if they were ever to be elected to government.

I shall leave to one side the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave somewhat glibly when he said that women in this country were underpaid by £21 billion. He had previously made much play of the fact that the Labour party wanted to do more than the Government to ensure that women were paid properly. I take that as the hon. Gentleman's first spending commitment, except that he is making it on behalf of employers and businesses. It was not a Government or taxpayer commitment, but a commitment being made by the hon. Gentleman on behalf of the private sector and employers. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman clocked up, for starters, a mere £21 billion burden on employers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The problem with the Minister's logic is that his colleague, the other Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) has recently gone on record saying that he believes that women should have pay parity with men in accordance with the law. Therefore, the Government would also have to fund the £21 billion differential.

Mr. Forth: I have not discussed with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary whether he is pledging a £21 billion expenditure increase, but, having heard what the hon. Member for Stretford has said, I shall have a quiet word with my colleague to see whether he agrees.

We also heard of the commitment underlying the Opposition's desire for the full effects of the original text of the EC directive on pregnant women to be implemented. I was challenged about that—I do not know why, as I thought that the position was clear. When explaining this matter to the House, I shall have to explain to Opposition Members how the European Community works. I do not blame the Opposition for not understanding the issues as fully as we might hope, but, given their new-found support and desire for everything European, I thought that they might have developed a better understanding.

The process is as follows: the Commission makes proposals which are considered by the European Council and the Council of Ministers. During that process the proposals are amended—it is not impossible for them to be amended, although to hear Opposition Members speak one would think that the proposals went straight from Commission draft into law without an intermediate stage. Given the Opposition's desire to give increasing powers to

the European Parliament and their lack of understanding of how the Council of Ministers works, we should perhaps excuse the lack of appreciation of the process.

The pregnant women directive was brought forward in one form by the Commission. In its original form, it would have involved a cost to the British taxpayer, to the Government and to employers of up to £500 million. The directive was then discussed at great length in the Council of Ministers. I attended the final meeting, at which the member states, guided by the Dutch presidency, came together behind a text that they found acceptable. I was prepared to support it. I abstained on a procedural matter because, as Opposition Members may recall, we had a reserve about the treaty base of the directive. I will not go into detail on that unless pressed to do so by Opposition Members.

The United Kingdom was alongside the presidency and almost all the other countries; it was the Italians who were out of step and who abstained because they were unhappy about the content of the directive. The key issue is that I was asked what effect the directive would have——

Mr. Leighton: What did the Italians want?

Mr. Forth: The Italians wanted more, as they always do. They want more of everything out of the European Community. The extent to which they adhere to the directives once they have got more out of them is a matter over which we shall draw a thick veil, because it is better not to go into it at this stage.

Opposition Members asked why there was so much mystery about what the pregnant women directive means. I commend to them an excellent publication from my Department called "People, Jobs and Progress". It gives a complete update—I will send the publication to Opposition Members—and a detailed account of the pregnant women directive as agreed by the European Community, including the United Kingdom. It is in print, there is no secret and there is nothing up my sleeve. We are proud of the result that we achieved.

A key factor is the burden on United Kingdom taxpayers and employers. We estimate, subject to detailed consideration, that the cost will be about £80 million. The original draft, to which the Opposition are pledged, would have involved £500 million. In addition to the £21 billion originally pledged, Opposition Members now pledge another £420 milion to add to the Labour party's expenditure total. We are doing quite well on that already.

The pledge shows the extent to which Opposition Members are now prepared to spend other people's money to bribe everyone in the run-up to the next election. It simply is not good enough. We will report back to the electorate at regular intervals.

The subject of the pregnant women directive leads me to the social action programme, of which the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made some play. He referred to the Council of Europe, but there is little difference for this purpose between the Community and the Council. I shall try to explain to the hon. Gentleman in particular why his continental friends are so wrong in what they say about the United Kingdom. We have always made it clear that we did not support the social charter in its original form because it breached the principles set out by the Heads of Government of the Community members in several important ways, not least that it ignored the principle of subsidiarity and the great diversity of traditions in the European Community member states. Worst of all, and relevant to this debate, the social charter in its original form ran counter to the avowed aim of all Heads of Government to maximise employment in the Community.

The whole thrust of this debate is that much of what is contained in the social action programme, which followed the social charter, would prejudice employment. That is why we are unhappy with large elements of it.

I hope that the hon. Member for Tooting will take my message back to his friends in the Council of Europe. The Government have always made it clear that we would be able and happy to support large parts of the social action programme. About 50 detailed matters, recommendations and directives were brought forward following the social charter and we have been able to support many of them. Contrary to what some people say, the Government have never exercised their veto in the Council of Ministers on any social action programme measure. As I have just explained to the House, we were part of the consensus which carried the pregnant women directive through the Council of Ministers. However, we have much difficulty on some matters. I shall give one or two examples, as both Labour and Liberal Democrat Members have said that, being good Europeans now, they support the social action programme 100 per cent. They said that before they even saw the details of the text. We like to read the text first and then make up our minds, but they supported it blind.

The first example is the working time directive, which is an attempt by the Community to prescribe not only how many hours per week people work and how much paid holiday and compensatory rest they should have and whether they can work a certain number of overtime hours after night work, but all the other things of which our continental partners seem so fond. The idea is to prescribe arbitrarily and artificially the shape and nature of people's work patterns.

Not only have we run our calculator over the figures, but we have consulted British industry, as we always do in such cases. It is estimated that in present circumstances the directive in anything like its present form would cost British industry about £5 billion. Opposition Members seem happy to heap such on-costs on to British employers.

We have asked all those involved in wealth creation and employment creation and they have told us that, in its present form, in which the Labour party supports it, the directive would be a disaster for this country.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister is aware that we totally reject the claim that the cost would be £5 billion. Nevertheless, will he make public the information on how that estimate was calculated?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman does not read the proceedings and reports of Committees of the House of Lords as closely as I thought he might. When his colleague who chairs the European Communities Sub-Committee in the House of Lords grilled me recently, I was asked that question and I gave all the details about how we worked out our costings on all the directives. That is a matter of public record and I shall let the hon. Gentleman have the figures. In return, will the hon. Gentleman tell me what calculations he has made of the impact and burden of the costs that the directive which he supports will impose on British industry? I invite him to let me have his detailed calculations. Shall we do a swap? He can have mine and if

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he will let me have his calculations I will send him, free and for nothing, quotations from employers about their reaction to the directive. I cannot say fairer than that.

Unless I am pressed to do so, I shall not talk in detail about the atypical work directive, or the directive on information and consulting employees, but the worrying feature of all such measures is that in adding to the burden of the cost of employment they would, in effect, prejudice employment levels, as some of my hon. Friends have said. My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) stressed that aspect.

Surely that is what gives the lie to Opposition Members' crocodile tears—that is the second time that they have been mentioned today. Opposition Members never pause to think what happens in the real world when they, alone or in concert with their partners in the EC, set about devising more and more burdens to lay upon the wealth creating sector.

We are concerned about that, because we care about how people create jobs and employment. Every time Opposition Members dream up some new whimsy or device to create an artificial paradise, the real effect is to place more burdens on the wealth-creating sector, which inevitably prejudices opportunities for employment. What they want to do would have the opposite effect from what they say. That is the disastrous gap between the rhetoric and the real effect. I sometimes wish that Opposition Members would be more honest with themselves, with the House and with the electorate. Whenever they make promises and in whatever form those promises may appear —whether they be the spending promises that we have elicited from the hon. Member for Stretford, or the regulatory bureaucratic and interventionist devices to which they are wedded and which they apparently support when they emanate from the EC—the result is the same. It is more restrictions and burdens on business and, therefore, almost inevitably, fewer opportunities for business to employ people.

The same strand of argument runs through the debate about the statutory minimum wage. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stretford for being so open with the House. He said that, in his judgment, many people in Britain were paid less than he thought was right and that a Labour Government would have a role in stepping forward and dictating to all employers that they must pay everyone no less than a certain wage. The hon. Gentleman believes that that would be beneficial.

The hon. Gentleman should give a bit of thought to just how that process would work, particularly among small businesses and employers who employ perhaps only one or two people, bearing in mind the fact that 95 per cent. of all businesses in Britain have fewer than 20 employees. He should come along and visit a business operating at the margins in the recession—a business in difficulty, as I concede that many are. As the Minister responsible for small businesses, I know it better than most. What will be the result if one arbitrarily introduces a law which says that, from today, an employer must pay all his employees more than he has been paying most of them hitherto? Many firms will certainly reduce the number of people working for them and some may go out of business altogether.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford must be correct that one cannot wave a wand and ensure that the 4 million people who will benefit from the law all get more money. I agree that some may be paid more, but many will lose their jobs and be paid nothing. That calculation must be made. If we are to be honest with the British electorate, we must make it clear that that is an essential part of the minimum wage argument.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: It is worth developing this important argument. The Minister is on record as saying that the existing wages councils may be abolished in the long run, but not yet. The councils provide a minimum wage for about 2·5 million people. If the Minister is right that most employers act honestly and behave properly towards their wages council-protected employees and given that he has decided not to abolish the wages councils, by his own logic, he is responsible for destroying jobs.

Mr. Forth: I regularly receive anguished letters from small businesses—mainly small retail businesses—telling me of the extreme difficulty in which the arbitrary awards made by the wages councils place them. I am giving great weight to what small businesses say and as time goes on we shall certainly consider the real effect of arbitrary wages council awards on small businesses and employment. Those arbitrary pay awards are almost certainly either reducing the number of people that firms can employ or, in some cases, driving firms out of business altogether. I am very conscious of that.

I want to refer to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which the hon. Member for Stretford also mentioned. The hon. Gentleman made a claim that we have frequently heard—that the OECD has not criticised the French minimum wage for having caused adverse employment effects. The hon. Gentleman invited me to quote from the OECD document and I shall do so. Page 55 says:

"Indications are that the increase in the relative value of the SMIC in the 1980s is likely to have reduced employment levels, especially for youths . . . and the unskilled . . . the problem is substantially more severe for youths, older workers and the unskilled than others . . . The evidence is stronger that the overall compensation of the least qualified exceeds equilibrium levels and that this has been costly in terms of diminished employment. Furthermore, the national minimum wage seems to be in part responsible for this outcome."

Nothing could be clearer. That is what the OECD, an impartial and expert body, said about the effect of the minimum wage in France. Those were the words that it used. Those are the concerns which Conservative Members have, but which Opposition Members are apparently not prepared to face. So anxious are they to bribe the electorate for their own jobs that they are not prepared to come clean about the effects of a statutory minimum wage.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister come absolutely clean? Will he make it clear that the report from which he quoted is not the report commissioned by the OECD specifically to examine minimum wages, commissioned and produced by Bazen and Martin, but is simply a country survey and a reinterpretation of existing data? There is a fundamental difference. One was an authentic and adequate study while the other was simply an opinion.

Mr. Forth: No, one is the official OECD document while the other is a document produced by two

individuals. However eminent they may be, the documents have a different status. I would rather stick with the official document if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

Industrial relations law is another worrying aspect of policy. I should have thought that it was beyond dispute that a sea change in industrial relations took place in the United Kingdom during the 1980s. Indeed, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) generously alluded to that. Almost no one denies that, through a series of progressive law reforms, we have given the trade unions their proper role in society and, more importantly, their proper relationship with their members. Further proposals are out for consultation at the moment. We want to move further in that direction. We want to make trade unions accountable to the law on the one hand and to their members on the other. The dramatic effect of such a policy over the years has been the enormous reduction in the number of days lost because of work stoppages.

For example, in 1979, 30 million days were lost because of work stoppages. In January 1979 alone, 3 million days were lost. Throughout 1990 fewer than 2 million days were lost. In the past 12 months only 750,000 days were lost and that is the lowest 12-month total for more than 50 years.

That is one explanation why this country has become such an attractive proposition for overseas investors. In 1988-89, the United Kingdom accounted for a far higher proportion of total inward investment of OECD countries into the EC than any other Community country. Thirty-nine per cent. of the investment into the European Community came to the United Kingdom. France had the next highest level with 14·5 per cent.

From 1988 to 1990, the United Kingdom accounted for 46 per cent. of American investment and 48 per cent. of Japanese investment. What better testimony could there be by hard-nosed business men from Japan and the United States looking for where best to invest in Europe than those figures, which show that they want to come here? They want to do that because of the excellence of this Government over the past 10 years—that goes without saying—and more importantly because of our tax regime, our labour law framework and our record on industrial disputes and how few of them we now have. That is why investment is coming to this country.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Minister aware that Wales attracts 20 per cent. of inward investment and that one reason for that is the progressive attitude of the Wales TUC and its general secretary, David Jenkins, who has negotiated single-union agreements and simplified trade union practice within manufacturing industry in Wales?

Mr. Forth: That is a very good point. I always pay tribute to the achievements of Wales. I had the pleasure of working and living in the Principality some years ago. The work of the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, many of the local authorities and other elements, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor explained, show that it is possible to attract large quantities of investment into this country. Wales has been particularly successful in that regard. That is surely a lesson for us all.

Mr. Carrington: My hon. Friend has failed to mention the availability of a highly skilled and well-trained work force which is vital to attracting inward investment to this country. That is the best testimony of the success of the Government's policies in ensuring that our work force gets the skilled training that they need.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes a good, fair point, which is somewhat in contradiction to the rather gloomy view that has been typically taken by Opposition Members.

I give the figures to the House not only because they are impressive—indeed, they are—but to make the important point that were the labour law framework that we have developed gradually and progressively ever to be jeopardised, many of the benefits would disappear. What reaction do we hear from the Opposition? They are now going to turn back the clock. If we read their documents correctly, they are telling us, although not very loudly—really rather quietly and I can see why—that they propose to reintroduce the possibility of secondary picketing, one of the most damaging elements of labour law which we have finally got rid of in the past few years. The closed shop would make a reappearance. Special industrial courts would be set up of the kind that we thought we had seen the back of a decade ago.

A series of proposals is being made very quietly by Opposition Members which would cumulatively restore trade unions to the position that they enjoyed in the 1970s and before. If anything was better calculated to scare off investment coming into this country, I cannot think of it. Opposition Members have a lot to answer for in terms of the effect that their policy would have on employment levels in this country.

We are beginning to see a rather frightening prospect. Under a Labour Government there would be an accumulation of factors all pointing in the same direction. We would have higher taxation on individuals and companies. The payroll tax made a reappearance again today. We would also have costs imposed not through taxation but through regulation on the private sector. The £21 billion that the hon. Member for Stretford kindly mentioned is only a starting point. We would also have the costs imposed by European Community directives, of which Opposition Members are ardent supporters without ever having read them. I mentioned about £400 million for one directive alone, to say nothing of the £5 billion that we estimate that the working time directive would cost. We must add to all that the costs of the national minimum wage proposals which Opposition Members are to introduce. Just to complete that rather horrifying picture, we have the prospect of trade unions being given back powers which we thought they would never have again.

It does not take a vivid imagination to work out what the effect of all that would be. It would be disastrous for employment levels, competitiveness and the attractiveness of this country to overseas investors.

Opposition Members must come clean. We will help them to do the job, I assure them. Conservative Members have come absoulutely clean about expenditure—we cannot do otherwise; we are in government, therefore everybody knows what we spend, on what and how. In the run-up to the next election, Opposition Members will have to tell the electorate in terms and in detail the effects of their measures on companies, on the private sector, on the taxpayer and on inward investment and, therefore, the net result on levels of employment. I can think of few things more serious or disastrous for the people of this country, about whom we all care in our different ways, than the series of measures which will be brought before the electorate by the Opposition.

[Mr. Forth]

The debate has given us an opportunity to glimpse what the Opposition have in mind. Interestingly, we heard almost nothing from Opposition Members about what their policies would mean. We saw a negative and sad——

Mr. Livsey: Not from me.

Mr. Forth: I accept that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor gave us a glimpse of his party's policies, but we had nothing from Labour Members. Now we know why. They are so scared of what will happen when the electorate finally rumbles the results of their policies that they will not tell the House. We will tell the electorate. That is the beginning and the end of the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham on bringing the debate before the House.

2.18 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not becoming clear that the Minister and the Whips are doing their best to prevent the next subject from being reached—that is, non-haemophiliacs who have become HIV-positive as a result of contaminated blood? Is there not a convention that the second motion on the Order Paper at least receives a certain amount of time? I ask you to protect us, Madam Deputy Speaker. More than 100 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion along those lines.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration, but he knows that, under our procedures and Standing Orders, the first motion for debate on a Friday is allowed to run until 2.30 pm and that the Chair has no authority to end the debate before that time. Another hon. Member wishes to be called to speak in the debate on employment policies, so I must now call him. Mr. Matthew Carrington.

2.19 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I am most grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak to a subject that is of great relevance and extreme importance to my constituency of Fulham. As an inner-London constituency, it has suffered badly from the rise in unemployment caused by the recession. I am therefore grateful for the chance to say a few words about the problems that my constituents are facing and about the measures that need to be taken to make their lot so much easier.

Conservative Members take unemployment seriously. We are well aware of the tragedies it creates and the great problems it causes for families and for society as a whole. We do not take the subject lightly. I for one take this debate seriously, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on raising this important subject.

Unemployment in Fulham is far too high. Fortunately, it is not yet back to the level of 1986 or quite back to the level of 1987, but there is no question but that unemployment in the area has risen badly in the past few years and that it is now extremely high. Let us consider the reasons why unemployment has risen. I am talking now from an inner-London perspective, because unemployment in inner London has certain characteristics that are not usual in other parts of the country.

There have been some major changes in the pattern of employment in my constituency in the past few decades. One great change is that the old manufacturing industries, which used to be so predominent in west London, have now almost completely disappeared. Consequently, many people who used to be employed in places such as Fulham power station cannot find jobs that will utilise the skills —sometimes the great skills—that they developed in their previous employment. I greatly welcome the Government's initiative to ensure that such people receive proper training so that they are reskilled and can find the new jobs that are still available and will continue to be available in inner London.

A recent survey has shown that there are two predominant sources of today's unemployment—the declines in the building and financial sectors. According to estimates, those two great declines have caused about 80 per cent. of the unemployment in my constituency and, given that 80 per cent. of our unemployment comes from just two sources, the problem cannot be eradicated by a quick fix. We cannot say that there is an easy solution to the problem of unemployment that would enable the people who have been thrown out of work in this recession to get back quickly into jobs.

It is not difficult to see why the decline in the building trade has caused so much unemployment. In many cases, house prices in inner London have gone down. They have certainly not been rising. Consequently, new building is not at its previous level and there are no longer the great building developments that used to employ many of my constituents. That problem will be solved only when the backlog of empty office space is used up and when the confidence to start new developments picks up, as will surely and shortly be the case now that we are seeing clear signs that our country is coming out of the savage and nasty recession that has affected London particularly badly.

The decline in the financial services market has caused a lot of unemployment for several reasons. Perhaps the most obvious is that that market expanded employment dramatically in anticipation of the big bang in 1987, when the financial services market was liberalised. A great deal of employment was created by the market activity in the financial sector, but even then it was seen to be clearly unsustainable.

Subsequently there was a major shake-up in the financial sector, and the effects were felt especially in the past 12 months. That caused a great deal of unemployment not only among lower-paid and clerical workers but among people who previously might have thought that they had a job for life. Highly paid and skilled people found suddenly that there was not the market activity in the financial sector to sustain their livelihood. They could not find new jobs when their existing employer made them redundant.

The loss of jobs has been tragic. Recovery will occur only as recovery comes to the City of London to create a great resurgence of employment. That will come partly from economic growth and partly from the same mechanism that will create a resurgence in the building industry. In London, the financial sector and the building industry in many ways go hand in hand. A great deal of office development in London was to cater for growth and anticipated growth in the financial sector. So the two causes of unemployment mesh together.

I most keenly urge Ministers to be aware that the importance of London as a financial centre is not only one of the more esoteric aspects of the negotiations about a single currency in Maastricht but one which bears great relevance to the employment of my constituents and those in many other inner-London constituencies. The importance of London as Europe's financial centre cannot be overestimated. It is important for both Britain's macroeconomic position and the employment of many Londoners. It is vital that the agreement negotiated at Maastricht provides a solution that reinforces the pre-eminence of London as a major financial centre.

Employment in the City of London is at present in a trough. We need to bring more activities into London, to ensure that employment grows again to take up the people who wish to find employment in the financial sector. I congratulate the Government on already achieving one success in that.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has been located in London. That was an achievement of which the Government rightly made much. It will bring prestige to London, especially in view of development in eastern Europe. The City will be able to play a role in the development of the economies which are going through such turmoil following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A major development bank such as the EBRD will become provides employment for a great many people. It is a labour-intensive industry employing not only people with a high level of skills but people with minor clerical skills. It is a great achievement that that bank has come to London. I expect great growth in employment as a result of the bank's activities.

It is equally important that the putative European central bank—we do not know in what final form it will exist but the embryonic form is being negotiated at Maastricht—should also be located in London. If not, at least its major employment activities should be located in London. A central bank is also labour intensive. It is a bank of supervision. That involves a great deal of clerical work, observation of the financial sector and analysis of reports from it. It will issue forms which need to be filled in and processed. All those mundane chores provide vast amounts of employment, which would be attractive to many of my constituents and of great benefit to Britain.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends who are involved in the negotiations at Maastricht to emphasise that, whatever else comes out of the talks, it is vital that the European central bank should be located in London. That should be a major plank of our negotiating stance. It is vital.

One of the other major causes of unemployment in London is related to education. It is said that a high proportion—recent estimates suggest that it may be as high as 25 per cent.—of children leave primary school unable to read and write. We do not yet know how many children leave secondary schools in inner London unequipped with the skills they need to achieve even basic employment standards. It is unreasonable to expect employers to provide that training, although I know of a number of employers in my constituency and close by who do——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 8356/90, relating to agricultural production methods, COM(91)258, relating to the development and future of the Common Agricultural Policy, 8886/91, relating to reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and 8950/91 and 9136/91, relating to amendments to the legal framework of the Common Agricultural Policy, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

AGGRAVATED VEHICLE-TAKING BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Sikhs in India (Human Rights)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington) *rose—*

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Has it come to your attention that earlier today the Court of Appeal found the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the Home Secretary, to be in contempt of court, and has said so? That arose out of the removal from this country of a teacher from Zaire, in breach of an order of court. Have you had a request from the Home Secretary to come to the House before the end of business today to make a statement or, if that is not possible, on Monday? If such a request has not been made, do you have the authority to make a request on behalf of the House as this is the first time that a Minister of the Crown has been found guilty of contempt of court?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Speaker did not receive a request from any Minister to make a statement this morning. I am not aware of the information that the hon. Member seems to have at his disposal. As he will appreciate, that is not a point of order. However, Ministers are on the Treasury Bench and will no doubt have heard what he has said and may take any appropriate action. In the meantime, the hon. Member may care to consult the authorities of the House relating to that matter.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Further to that point of order—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There can be no further to that point of order. I have made the situation clear. If the hon. Member has a new point of order, I will take it.

Mr. McKay: On a new point of order. Last week we debated the Asylum Bill. It contains a clause which allows the Secretary of State to give the inspectorate powers to send people back to their country. It also gives the Secretary of State powers to decide in such cases. The Bill now lacks credibility because of that contempt of court. Should not a statement be made to the House? Or should not we ask for the Bill to be returned to the Floor of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a most ingenious way to try to put a point of order. We are taking time out of an Ajournment debate which has been moved.

Mr. Dicks: I want to mention yet again in the House the persecution of Sikhs in the Punjab. Members of the Sikh community living in my constituency, and Sikhs throughout the world, have been concerned for the safety of family and friends living in the Punjab. The rape of young women, the beating of old men and the murder of young boys, to say nothing of the imprisonment without trial of many thousands of innocent people, has been going on since 1984 and continues unabated. Indian security forces are killing hundreds of innocent Sikhs in fake encounters and there is evidence that those forces have swept through villages in the Punjab intent on nothing less than widespread slaughter.

All those activities are taking place under the umbrella of President's rule, which in effect means direct rule from Delhi. That regime gives the security forces the unfettered power to take whatever action they wish against people living in the state of Punjab.

Investigations into allegations of police torture are rare. When such allegations have been established, prosecutions have not taken place. According to Amnesty International, no police officer has ever been convicted of committing human rights violations in the Punjab.

Legal safeguards for the protection of human rights do not apply to those arrested under special legislation relating to national security. Detainees in the Punjab are arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act, which allows detention without trial for a year, the burden of proof being placed on the accused to prove his innocence.

The legislation imposes a minimum of five years' imprisonment on anyone convicted of terrorist or disruptive activities. Disruptive activities include the peaceful expression of views which question the sovereignty or territorial integrity of India or support any claim for independence.

The Indian Government are conducting a similar campaign of oppression against the Muslim community in the part of Kashmir occupied illegally by the Indian security forces. The legitimate call by Muslims living in Kashmir for self-determination is being denied with a brutality that should be condemned by the civilised world, but unfortunately is not.

Parliament has refused to condemn atrocities carried out by the Indian Government, no matter how well documented they are by Amnesty International—the Government, because of its friendship with India as a Commonwealth country, and the Labour party, because of its close relationship with the Indian Congress party and the Gandhi family in particular. Actions of this kind, condemned elsewhere, have been ignored in India.

Successive Indian Governments, either under the control or influence of the Congress party, have claimed for themselves the role of governing the world's largest democracy. Unfortunately, many Governments around the world seem prepared to accept the claim. It is far easier to accept the mask worn by the Indian Government as the true face of India today than to ask awkward questions about the plight of many thousands of Indian citizens who seek nothing more than to have their rights and religion recognised. To quote an old adage, there are none so blind as those who will not see.

How can Governments who went to war to defend the rights of the Kuwaitis in their own country, refuse to bring pressure on the Indian Government to recognise the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab? Are the Kuwaitis more important than the Sikhs? Or can it be that much of the world's oil comes from the middle east but only food to feed millions of hungry mouths in India is produced in the Punjab? That may be a cynical question, but it demands an answer.

As I have often said, the British Government have a unique responsibility in this matter. In 1947, when India obtained its independence, it was the British who accepted a guarantee by the Hindus, who make up 84 per cent. of the population, that the self-determination of the Sikhs in the Punjab would be recognised. On that basis, the British Government granted India its independence. Unfortunately for the Sikhs, the British Government have

done nothing to enforce the guarantee and successive Congress party-dominated Indian Governments have been able to ignore the pledge.

The refusal of the Indian Government, aided and abetted by Britain, to keep their word has led the Sikh people to call for their own independent state. Unfortunately, as happens in many groups, some extremists have used the situation for their own ends. Their approach has enabled the Indian Government to confuse the situation and give the impression that their fight in the Punjab against a handful of terrorists is, in reality, a fight for democracy against anarchy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The majority of Sikhs, both inside and outside India, are opposed to violence in any form and want through the democratic process only that to which they feel they were entitled—self-determination. What they were guaranteed in 1947, they must be entitled to some 44 years later, and the Indian Government would do well to recognise that fact.

What the Sikhs want now, above all, is for the rest of the world to recognise the suffering that they are having to endure in their own country. They would like to see pressure brought to bear on the Indian Government to bring an end to this oppression. The abuse of human rights cannot be condoned, no matter whether it takes place in a middle eastern country or a country that belongs to the Commonwealth. Nor can the actions of a handful of extremists be used as an excuse for the oppression of a religious minority in the name of democracy.

The concept of good government has now been introduced in relation to the British aid programme. As I understand it, from now on only those Governments who recognise basic human rights and allow freedom of speech in a democratic setting will qualify for aid. I hope that this new approach will be brought firmly to the attention of the Indian Government who at present receive more than £100 million annually in overseas aid.

If the British Government were to take a tough stand on the abuse of human rights in India and persuade the Indian Government to recognise the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab, I feel certain that the majority of Sikhs throughout the world would be prepared to renounce violence as a method of achieving their objective of self-determination and would welcome the opportunity to meet anyone in an international forum in an attempt to come to a peaceful settlement of the problem.

As I said when I opened my remarks, this is the third occasion on which I have had to raise this matter. This week when I knew that I had the Adjournment debate, I rang the Indian high commission hoping to speak to the high commissioner about the situation. That might have enabled me to come to the debate with some good news for the Sikhs. He agreed to meet me. Then I had a phone call to say that he could not do so, but that he would contact me. I am still waiting. It reminds me of the time when I went to India to discuss this matter with the then Home Affairs Minister, Mr. Butta Singh. He did exactly the same —he said that he would telephone me at 5 pm, but that was five or six years ago and I am still waiting.

Why are the Indian Government not prepared to talk about this matter? They could say, "Perhaps you have got it wrong, Mr. Dicks, here are some other facts." They might say, "Perhaps we have gone over the hill with the Sikhs in the Punjab. We shall listen to you and perhaps we can talk to their reasonable leaders but not to the extremists and the terrorists."

I am surprised that the Indian Government are so awkward about a matter in which so many of us are interested. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) hopes to speak in the debate. We seek recognition by the Indian Government of the situation in the Punjab. I am sure that that Government know what is going on and they should publicly recognise the abuse of human rights. I should like my Government to stand up and be counted on this. We have a good record on standing up for human rights, a subject on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has uttered strong words. In a recent comment he rightly pointed to the fact that we must unite against acts of terrorism. I fully accept that.

A handful of terrorists in the Punjab are using the situation for their own ends, but the majority of those living there are decent people who want to live a normal life but are living in fear. I ask the Government again to listen to this plea and at least to take up the matter with the Indian Government. I have an Amnesty International report on human rights violations in the Punjab. It is dated May 1991. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and his colleagues have not read it I shall be delighted to make sure that they have a copy. They should know in detail what is going on. If they did, I am sure that they would take action along the lines that I suggest and would not be prepared to sit back and say and do nothing.

2.41 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) for raising this extremely important matter and for allowing me to intervene to express my support. The matter is of great concern to my Sikh constituents in Gravesham and Northfleet. They express great misery and anxiety about the fate of their families in the Punjab, where, as we all know, there is a total denial of the democratic rights to state and Government and a legislature. We also know about the frequent infringements of human rights.

It is incumbent on the Republic of India to ensure that the rule of law and human rights prevail throughout that country, and I ask the Minister to pay close attention to this matter. At the recent Commonwealth conference in Harare, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly raised the issue of the importance of human rights, particularly in the context of overseas aid. This country gives a vast amount of such aid to the Republic of India, and we should make it clear to the Indian Government that the two matters march together. I hope that, before my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington has to raise this matter yet again in the House, we will have good news about the restoration of democracy and human rights to the Punjab.

2.43 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) for the way in which he introduced the debate. The Sikhs who live in Hayes and Harlington are extremely fortunate to have in my hon. Friend such a doughty champion. He is a loyal

[Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones]

friend in the House, and I am sure that he is also a loyal friend to them. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who also has a substantial Sikh community in his constituency, has been able to take part in the debate. I was especially pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington repudiating people who indulge in violence. I would have expected nothing less of him and shall refer later to that matter.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's remarks. The issue that he has raised is important, and he has raised it in the House before. It is entirely understandable that the Sikhs in this country should take a close interest in the terrible and tragic events that are now taking place in the Punjab. I assure my hon. Friend that we share his concern —as do hon. Members in all parts of the House and many people in the country—about the situation in the Punjab, not least the concern about human rights.

I do not want to leave my hon. Friend or the House in any doubt. We take the issue of human rights extremely seriously. It is not a subject which can be ignored or hidden away in some dark corner. My hon. Friend was right to refer to what the Prime Minister said about that, and the Foreign Secretary has made it clear that we shall increasingly be looking at the criterion of good government in our relations with other countries.

There can therefore be no dispute about the Government's attachment to that principle and the fact that serious abuses of human rights, such as summary execution, arbitrary imprisonment and torture, wherever they may occur, all deserve and obtain the repudiation of the House. Hon. Members can rest assured that the British Government will continue to press for the strongest respect for human rights throughout the world. The House and the British people expect nothing less from us.

My hon. Friends will understand, however, that we must judge carefully just how much prominence to give to human rights issues in our relationships with other governments. Sometimes, with a friendly Government, that makes for hard choices. If we had dealings only with countries with impeccable human rights records, our influence in the world would be significantly reduced and there would almost certainly be a consequent loss of jobs in this country.

Mr. Dicks *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to make a little more progress, after which I will willingly give way to him.

An important element in Britain's excellent bilateral relations with India is the many contacts at all levels between our two countries. There are about 800,000 people of Indian origin in this country and they play a vital part in that relationship. The Sikhs, many of whom live in the constituencies of my hon. Friends, are the largest group among them, totalling about 300,000 people.

The Asian community in Britain makes an important and much valued contribution to many aspects of our national life, as I know from those in my constituency, and the vast majority of them are industrious and law-abiding and are increasingly making, as we can say from our experience in all our constituencies, a significant and increasingly important contribution to the life of the country.

Mr. Dicks: I accept what the Minister said about the impact of selecting only some countries with good human rights relations as against others, and how wonderful it would be if every country with which we dealt had such good relations. He also spoke about dealing with friends. If, as is the case—the Prime Minister said so—the Indian Government are a friend of the British Government, that must offer the best opportunity to bring pressure, not necessarily publicly but privately, on that Government and their representatives when the Minister and his colleagues meet them, as they often do.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept what my hon. Friend says, but I would add a rider. My constituents, who are principally Kashmiris, asked me the other day what the difference was between a terrorist and a freedom fighter. The difference, which my hon. Friends will immediately appreciate, is that, like Britain, India is a democracy. As Winston Churchill said, a democracy is an imperfect form of government. We in Britain, like all democracies, recognise that we have deficiencies, but if one lives in a democracy, one advances one's cause through the democratic process and not through violence, and we must all consistently make that point to our constituents.

We should also remember that Sikhs have played, and continue to play, an important role not just in the life of the United Kingdom but in the life of India. They are, as my hon. Friends will know, disproportionately represented among India's leading politicians, public servants, industrialists, business men and the military. The overwhelming majority of Indian Sikhs are law-abiding, responsible citizens who wish to live their lives in peace and harmony with their fellow citizens, whether in the United Kingdom or in the Indian republic.

Unfortunately, a minority that has never commanded a democratic majority in the Sikh home state of Punjab has been waging a violent campaign for a religiously defined homeland. In attempting to obtain by violence what they cannot obtain by democratic means, those Sikh extremists threaten the constitutional fabric of the Indian state and put shame on the overwhelming majority of law-abiding Sikh citizens.

Sikhs represent about 60 per cent. of the population of the Punjab and they are widely scattered throughout the rest of India. The Punjab is the richest state in India and, in general, Sikhs are industrious and prosperous. They are certainly not underprivileged or second-class citizens. Some members of the Sikh community are concerned about what they perceive as a threat to the traditional Sikh way of life. They also have long-standing concerns about water resources and a grievance about the promise made in the 1960s, as yet unfulfilled, to make the city of Chandigarh the capital of the Punjab state alone. Whatever those grievances may be, I am sure that my hon. Friends will support me in urging that they be pursued and resolved through the democratic process rather than by means of the bomb, kidnapping and the bullet.

The Indian Government face a serious challenge from terrorist violence in the Punjab, which has resulted in more than 5,000 deaths so far this year. Of those, some 3,200 were civilians and members of the security forces killed in terrorist incidents and about 1,800 were terrorists. We have been particularly appalled by terrorist attacks on innocent people. Trains and buses have been held up and innocent passengers gunned down.

In a disturbing development, Sikh terrorists have killed up to 100 relatives of police officers this year, including women and children. We support the Indian Government's efforts to deal with the violence. At the same time, in our regular contacts with the Indian Government, we have encouraged them to exercise the greatest restraint in dealing with the problems facing them, and have emphasised the need to respect human rights.

For their part, the Indian Government have underlined to us their determination to see that human rights are not violated. They acknowledge that some abuses have occurred and have assured us that members of the security forces responsible for wrongdoing are brought to justice. The Indian Government have told us that, up to 31 March 1991, 89 police officers and 79 other ranks have been dismissed from the Punjab police force, and 68 officers have been prematurely retired. We welcome those facts, which have not previously been made public, and we have emphasised to the Indian Government the importance of making it clear that members of the security forces will not be allowed to get away with misconduct.

Mr. Dicks: An excerpt from Amnesty International's report states:

"The police have repeatedly frustrated attempts to bring those accused of human rights violations to justice. Investigations into allegations of police torture of detainees are rare and even when they have established responsibility, prosecutions are not known to have occurred. Although in 1988 the Supreme Court ordered the Punjab Government to lay charges against 21 police officers identified as having tortured detainees at Ladha Kothi Jail in 1984 and 1985, the Secretary to the Punjab Government charged with carrying out the order refused to do so. The Director-General of Police opposed legal action on the grounds that such prosecutions would"—

this point is important—

"demoralize the police force. To Amnesty International's knowledge, no police officer has ever been convicted of committing human rights violations in Punjab."

That cannot be justice or a recognition of human rights.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I had just referred to some figures, although not relating to prosecutions, released by the Indian Government today. I shall refer to Amnesty International's report in a moment.

The Indian Government have been actively seeking a solution to Punjab's problems through a dialogue with those in the community who wish to participate. The election commission's decision in June to postpone the planned elections in Punjab took place against a background of increased violence and the murder of more than 25 candidates. The postponement was doubtless exactly what the extremists were aiming to achieve. The recent deployment of additional security forces to the Punjab is intended to achieve a climate in which elections can be held by February 1992. We hope that the efforts by the Indian Government to find a democratic solution acceptable to the majority in the Punjab will succeed.

In its most recent report on Punjab—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington has just referred—Amnesty International made a number of serious allegations about human rights abuses. Those must be taken seriously and the Government will certainly do so. We are in no doubt about that, but we have to recognise the difficulties facing the Indian authorities and the need for exceptional measures to maintain law and order in the Punjab. India has a democratically elected Government and a rule of law. Legal remedies are available in India. They may be slower than one might wish, but, as I have already said, allegations are investigated by the Indian authorities and action is taken against wrongdoers.

Unfortunately, the activities of Sikh terrorists are not confined to India. There is a small minority of Sikhs in Britain who actively offer help and support to Sikh extremists in India. There should be no doubt that we will not tolerate people living in this country and enjoying our freedoms, who abuse those freedoms to promote violent, anti-democratic threats to India or any other country. This country and the House know only too well the threat from terrorism. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister assured the Indian Government recently that we will continue to work closely with them in every way that we possibly can to defeat the evil of terrorism.

That co-operation is something to which both we and the Indian Government attach a high priority and which is much appreciated by the Indian Government. Our police have been successful in bringing to justice a number of people responsible for Sikh terrorist activities in this country. We unreservedly condemn those who support terrorism and will do all we can to root out this evil within the framework of our laws. We shall continue to look for ways of strengthening our co-operation with India. We hope to be able to conclude a bilateral agreement with India soon covering the confiscation of terrorist funds.

We urge all decent, law-abiding Sikhs in this country to deny moral and financial support to those organisations that contribute to the misery and suffering brought to the Punjab and India by extremist violence. Sikh extremists in the Punjab claim to receive support in the form of training and weapons from Pakistan. We urge the Government of Pakistan to play their part in preventing material support being provided from its territory to Sikh extremists in the Punjab.

I am grateful to my two hon. Friends for participating in the debate. Their constituents and my Kashmiri constituents in Watford have an important role to play. Those constituents are British subjects and play an increasingly prominent role in the life of our country, much to my delight and to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington. We must tell our constituents that they know how we in Britain consider terrorists and how we have suffered from terrorism. There can be no justification for it within a democracy.

I know that it is the wish of my hon. Friends the Members for Hayes and Harlington and for Gravesham to encourage Sikhs to work as hard as they can for whatever cause they believe in. The Sikhs have that right and will receive a sympathetic hearing from my hon. Friends and me, but the Sikhs must also recognise that the cause they seek to serve will not be helped unless their condemnation of violence and extremism is whole hearted. Their encouragement to Her Majesty's Government to support the Indian Government in their fight to eradicate the scourge of terrorism must be total. That is the British way of behaving and I know that my hon. Friends' constituents would wish to act in the same way. That is how they can best contribute to the cause in which they believe.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 November 1991

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Meat Production

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the National Farmers Unions of England and Scotland and the Farmers Union of Wales to encourage their members to continue producing beef, lamb and pig production to meet consumers' requirements.

Mr. Curry: At the Prime Minister's seminar on food marketing on 15 November my right hon. Friend the Minister announced two important new initiatives to help farmers produce what consumers want. A new group marketing grant, worth £5·4 million over the next three years, is being introduced to encourage groups of farmers to develop and expand. Within the Ministry a new market task force has been set up to identify and disseminate information on broad market opportunities to farmers. All sectors of the industry have welcomed these new initiatives.

I am pleased that the National Farmers Union has also announced a new food from the countryside initiative to bring farmers and customers together, and to help farmers develop the necessary business skills.

The message to livestock and other producers is that they should collaborate and get closer to the market. That will provide opportunities to increase the market share for British food at home and abroad.

Milk

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will pay compensation to commercial producers of sheeps' and goats' milk who are suffering financial hardship.

Mr. Curry: No.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each of the claims for set-aside which have been scrutinised during 1990-91 giving the location of the farm and the size of payment involved; and if he will list the cases where the participants failed to receive the payment, with the reasons in each case why they did not comply with their undertakings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Moreover, data identifying individual farms cannot be provided without breach of confidentiality.

All set-aside claims are properly scrutinised, but it is not my Department's policy to publish details of its inspection arrangements, as this could seriously impede effective enforcement. Inspections in England during the 1990-91 set-aside year identified 18 serious irregularities and a number of additional cases involving minor breaches of the scheme rules. Payments were withheld or recovered in full or in part in 39 cases.

Aerial Photography

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's aerial photography, including the counties covered, the frequency with which the photographs are taken, what is identified, and to what use the photographs are put.

Mr. Gummer: The aerial photography unit, which is part of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, undertakes aerial survey work both in support of the activities of my Department and as a commercial service. Aerial surveys have covered sites in all counties in England and Wales. Many sites are photographed only once, others at infrequent intervals. The environmentally sensitive areas have been photographed at three-yearly intervals to assist in my Department's long-term monitoring programme. Other work for my Department is used in a wide range of applications related to environmental monitoring, land use, crop husbandry and disease studies. Commercial applications include photography in connection with land use and planning, coastal and flood protection, conservation and landscape inventories and crop trials.

Property Sales

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the properties and their locations which he has sold during 1990-91; if he will list in each case their estimated value and the amount realised at the sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Details of the property sold in the period 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 are as follows:

Property	[1] *Estimated value* £	*Sale price* £
385, Kirkstall road, Leeds	[2]550,000	550,000
Land at Pill Heath Andover, Hampshire	[3]	7,000
No. 2, The Cottages, Lee Valley Experimental Husbandry Farm, Hertfordshire	59,500	51,000
No. 1, High Barns, Boxworth, Cambridgeshire	[4]66,667	70,000
No. 2, High Barns, Boxworth, Cambridgeshire	[4]66,667	67,000
The Hermitage, Batchmere, West Sussex	[5]65,000	65,000
Land at Bury Hill, Potton, Bedfordshire	[6]500,000	525,000

Notes:
[1] Estimated value when first marketed.
[2] Property sold to the Leeds Development Corporation at price determined by the District Valuer.
[3] Part of a larger piece of land offered for sale. Price agreed by the District Valuer.
[4] One of three identical houses valued together at £200,000.
[5] Property sold to sitting tenant.
[6] Sold by tender.

Surplus property is disposed of in accordance with Treasury guidelines. I am content that the prices achieved for these properties reflect their true open market values.

Sea Defences

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his planned allocation of money to Suffolk and Norfolk for river and flood protection and sea defence coast protection, in the light of the autumn statement.

Mr. Curry: The provision for flood and sea defence and arterial drainage underlying the autumn statement announcement will facilitate an increase in grant to the National Rivers Authority in England from £30·1 million in 1991-92 to £37·7 million in 1992-93. This should fund an increasing capital works programme of about £80 million in 1992-93.

In recognition of the particular problems of that area, an increased allocation for capital works of £7 million will be made to the National Rivers Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk and the basic rate of grant in that district will be raised from 45 to 55 per cent., plus the existing 20 per cent. supplement for tidal and sea defence work. The increases in allocation and grant rate are conditional on the local flood defence committee, including county council members, agreeing to increase levies to fund the programme of works.

The provision for grants to local authorities, internal drainage boards and maritime district councils in England for flood and coastal defence works amounts to £24·7 million in 1992-93. Such authorities within Norfolk and Suffolk will decide on priorities within their areas of responsibility and any scheme proposed will be considered for approval and grant aid by the Department.

TRANSPORT

Road Closure, Ealing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call in the application to Ealing council for the closure of Berkeley avenue from Oldfield lane, North to Greenford road.

Mr. Chope: If a private development requires the closure of a highway it is for the developer to make application to the Secretary of State for Transport for the necessary order under section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. No such application has been made in respect of any development affecting Berkeley avenue.

Vehicle Safety

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to publish the data received by the vehicle inspectorate on the incidence of safety-related defects in motor vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope: The Department publishes details of safety-related design and manufacturing defects which result in recall campaigns by the vehicle manufacturers. Details are published bi-annually and circulated to all major United Kingdom public libraries, the Consumers Association, trade associations, motoring journals and to the police and local authority trading standards departments.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to require motor manufacturers to provide information as to the number of complaints received as to defects in motor vehicles.

Mr. Chope: The Department and the vehicle manufacturers agreed in 1979 that manufacturers would provide information to the Department on safety defects in vehicles and components, under a voluntary code of practice. Since this and subsequent additional codes were put in place, 897 recall campaigns have been initiated by the manufacturers, involving 7·8 million vehicles.

Pedestrian Accidents

Mr. Rees: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the proportion of the population in the higher age groups who are statistically shown to be involved in pedestrian accidents while crossing roads.

Mr. Chope: The police complete a standard report form for each injury road accident of which they become aware, in Great Britain. This report includes information on the age and activity of all casualties in those accidents. The table shows the number of people over 60, in five year age bands, who were injured while crossing roads in Great Britain in 1990, the resident population in each of those age bands, and the rate of casualties injured while crossing the road per 100,000 population.

Pedestrian casualties injured while crossing roads: By age: Great Britain 1990

Age	*Number of casualties*	*Population (thousands)*	*Rate per 100,000 population*
60-64	1,455	2,828·4	51
65-69	1,605	2,778·2	58
70-74	1,681	2,116·9	79
75-79	1,898	1,830·1	104
80-84	1,517	1,217·4	125
85 and over	952	850·3	112

Pelican Crossings

Mr. Rees: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for the control times on pelican crossings to be lengthened.

Mr. Chope: The timing of phases at crossings is set on the basis of traffic and pedestrian flows and the width and layout of the crossing. Trials have been carried out with new equipment that provides for the length of the pedestrian crossing phase to meet demand. The results of these trials are being evaluated.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *522*, on directional signing for Heathrow, if he will bring forward the planned 1994 revision to an earlier date.

Mr. Chope: I regret that as the planned revision is a complex project involving the redesign and replacement of 10,000 existing signs, it would not be practical to bring it forward, but if my hon. Friend has any specific problems with signing at Heathrow I shall be pleased to have the matter investigated.

Freight Operations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the number and location of continental-gauge freight terminals and depots required in the United Kingdom following the opening of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has already announced the locations of the nine intermodal terminals it proposes to use to feed channel tunnel freight on to British Rail's existing track network. These will handle intermodal and other freight traffic which will be moved in wagons compatible with British Rail's existing structure gauge, subject to certain limited gauge enhancements on specific route sections.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Civil Aviation Authority has made a further response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the CAA's provision of navigation and air traffic control services to civil aircraft published in July 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Civil Aviation Authority publishes its second, interim, response today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The authority's initial response, made in December 1990, said that the authority had accepted all but one of the MMC's 40 recommendations and that work had already begun on implementing many of them. This work has continued, and the authority has made progress in such important areas as consultation with users on charges and airspace planning; introducing improvements to project management; and laying the foundations for more efficient and effective manpower planning.

I shall be keeping in close touch with the chairman of the CAA about the programme of change which the CAA has instituted in response to the MMC's recommendations.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available estimates of the number of vehicles using the Woolwich free ferry; and what were the comparable figures at a similar point in each of the preceding five years.

Mr. Chope: The average number of vehicles carried per day was as follows:

	Number
October 1991	2,740
October 1990	2,590
October 1989	2,840
October 1988	2,930
November 1987[1]	440
November 1986[1]	1,860

[1] Figures for October are not readily available.

SK Link

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold a full investigation and inquiry into all the circumstances relating to the sinking of the SK Link including the spreading of the fire from the engine room to the cargo.

Mr. McLoughlin: A comprehensive investigation into the fire and subsequent explosions on the Swedish registered ro-ro cargo ship Stora-Korsnas-Link 1 is being carried out by the marine accident investigation branch as the fire broke out when the vessel was in UK territorial waters, off the River Tees. The Swedish authorities are also investigating the incident.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of arrangements for the transportation and handling of the cargo on board the SK Link.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Swedish registered Stora-Korsnas Link 1 was carrying a cargo of forest products and two containers of sodium chlorate which were stowed at the after end of the main deck. These were loaded at Gavle, Sweden for Hartlepool.

The Department is investigating the circumstances surrounding the loading of the cargo in co-operation with the Swedish authorities.

Fire Fighting at Sea

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of those occasions when county council fire services have used good will agreements to assist with fire fighting at sea within the 3-mile limit of United Kingdom coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since 1 January 1989, fire services around the coast of the United Kingdom have assisted with fire fighting at sea within the 12-mile limit of United Kingdom coastal waters on 15 occasions. Arrangements for use of fire services in fire fighting at sea are made by the local fire authorities as part of emergency contingency planning involving all relevant emergency services, including HM Coastguard and local port/harbour authorities rather than good will agreements.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent he relies on the availability and expertise of the county council fire services in coastal areas for fighting fires within United Kingdom coastal waters.

Mr. McLoughlin: Availability and expertise of fire services in coastal areas for fighting fires within United Kingdom coastal waters is dependent upon local emergency contingency planning arrangements, and the nature of the incident.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he made of driverless traction systems before deciding to adopt such a form of control on the docklands light railway; and what assessment was made by the chief inspector of railways of the reliability of such transport.

Mr. Freeman: Under the provisions of section 11 of the London Docklands Railway Act 1984 the London Transport Executive was required to submit to the Secretary of State for his approval plans of its proposals with respect to, among other things, signalling and rolling stock. These plans were assessed and approved on behalf of the Secretary of State by Her Majesty's railway inspectorate.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the docklands light railway to discuss its meeting of its quality of service objectives in relation to reliability and punctuality of *(a)* the bus service and *(b)* the rail service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Sir Peter Levene has just been appointed as the new chairman of the docklands light railway and one of his primary tasks is to ensure that the quality of docklands light railway services improves as quickly as possible. London Transport is responsible for providing or securing the provision of bus services in docklands, as elsewhere in London. It has been set exacting service quality objectives some of which it has achieved ahead of the April 1992 target date.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of docklands light railway to discuss the provision of information to the public regarding major changes of routes and the replacement bus service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: London Transport makes every effort to publicise changes to its bus routes in docklands. I understand that, in order to publicise the next major changes in November and December, London Transport plans to place advertisements in local papers and to distribute 100,000 free newspapers in the area. This is in addition to the on-bus publicity and press releases which normally accompany London Transport bus route changes.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which bodies and councils he consulted before announcing his decision to transfer responsibility for the docklands light railway to the London Docklands development corporation; if he will publish the results of those consultations, including a list of those councils which supported and those which opposed the proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 12 November. The decision in principle to transfer the DLR to the LDDC will be subject to formal consultation under section 10(2) of the London Regional Transport Act 1984. We shall consult LRT and LDDC, those councils through whose area the DLR runs or will run, and the London Regional Passengers Committee.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to introduce primary legislation to transfer responsibility for docklands light railway to the London Docklands development corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* No. Powers are already available to LT under section 9 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

Local Safety Schemes

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total amount of money requested by local authorities for local safety schemes in the transport policies and programmes submissions for 1992-93.

Mr. Chope: A total of £84·6 million.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff within his Department have specific responsibility for *(a)* setting objectives for meeting targets of pegging carbon dioxide emission by 2005 and *(b)* monitoring those objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The transport policy unit with a staff of 13 is responsible for co-ordinating the Department's work on environmental matters including carbon dioxide emissions.

Motorway Service Stations

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often his Department inspects facilities provided at service stations on motorways.

Mr. Chope: Inspections are made annually to ensure compliance with the terms of leases granted by the Secretary of State.

Copeland

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to visit Copeland.

Mr. Chope: I last visited Copeland in August and shall be in West Cumbria shortly for the commencement of works on the Dalton bypass.

West Cumbria Transport Plan

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will receive a deputation from West Cumbria led by the hon. Member for Copeland to discuss the proposals in West Cumbria's "Transport Plan for Survival in the 90s".

Mr. Chope: When I have received a copy of the plan I shall consider the hon. Member's request.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had on West Cumbria's "Transport Plan for Survival in the 90s"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have received one formal representation from the West Cumbria transport study group.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he intends to make to the report of the West Cumbria transport study group "West Cumbria's Transport Plan for Survival in the 90s"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* I understand that a summary of the report was published on 7 November. I have not yet seen a copy of the full report, but it will be studied carefully before any response is made.

Juggernauts

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from local authorities concerning measures to deal with overloaded juggernauts on roads.

Mr. Chope: Various representations are received during the course of regular liaison meetings with local authorities.

Lorry Loads

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislation to empower county councils to confiscate lorries found to be above the load limits.

Mr. Chope: No. Local authority trading standards offices already have powers to prohibit overloaded vehicles from further movement and to prosecute drivers and operators. Licensing authorities have the power to revoke operators' licences where there is persistent or serious overloading.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consult the Association of County Councils over measures to curb the hauliers of cargoes transported on overloaded lorries.

Mr. Chope: There is regular discussion with local authority associations, including the Association of County Councils, on overloading issues, and how to deal with them.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments his Department has undertaken on the number of road accidents which have been caused by overloaded lorries.

Mr. Chope: None.

Tees and Hartlepool Port (Cargoes)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many metric tonnes of *(a)* chemical and *(b)* petrochemical cargoes were carried into and out of the United Kingdom via the Tees and Hartlepool port in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise figures for the import and export of chemicals and petroleum products through Tees and Hartlepool in 1989-90 and 1990-91 are as follows:

	1989-90	*Thousand tonnes 1990-91 (provisional)*
Chemicals		
Imports	1,454	1,386
Exports	2,349	2,008
Total	3,803	3,394
Petroleum Products:		
Imports	1,987	1,647
Exports	1,330	1,556
Total	3,317	3,202

Provisional Car Licences

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many provisional car licences were issued in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: A total of 1,010,663 provisional car licences were issued in 1990-91.

Road Fund Taxes (Evasion)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to prevent the evasion of British road fund taxes by coach operators registering their vehicles in Eire but operating them within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Bilateral agreements with other EC states —and the treaty of Rome—provide exemption from vehicle excise duty for temporarily imported vehicles registered in other EC states. All passenger service vehicles used for journeys in the United Kingdom must comply with the relevant regulations, including those relating to cabotage.

Road Accidents

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide additional information to that published on 11 November in his "Road Safety Report 1990-91" disaggregating further the information in charts A and B into numbers of casualties at different levels of severity for each road user type in urban—speed limits up to 40 mph—and rural—speed limits over 40 mph—areas separately.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is given in the table. "Built-up roads" refers to roads with speed limits of 40 mph or less and "Non built-up roads" refers to speed limits over 40 mph.

Casualties: by built-up and non built-up road, road user type[1] and severity: 1982 to 1990

Number of casualties

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Built-up roads									
Pedestrians									
Killed	1,473	1,535	1,509	1,442	1,477	1,362	1,413	1,395	1,357
KSI	17,254	17,191	17,885	17,945	17,595	16,279	16,525	16,228	16,086
All severities	58,096	58,579	60,357	58,428	58,079	54,684	56,071	57,495	57,608
Pedal cyclists									
Killed	187	186	189	166	151	168	142	177	152
KSI	4,748	5,189	5,309	4,562	4,225	4,189	4,034	4,204	3,748
All severities	24,984	27,389	27,551	24,070	23,268	23,419	23,230	25,596	23,701
Motorcyclists									
Killed	593	517	523	425	399	401	336	322	313
KSI	15,643	14,073	14,165	12,923	11,652	9,850	8,869	8,553	7,531
All severities	55,382	50,253	49,969	44,394	41,032	35,965	33,551	32,986	30,095

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Car Users									
Killed	690	581	631	590	561	555	485	534	528
KSI	14,607	11,129	12,097	12,329	12,005	12,391	12,068	11,823	11,646
All severities	86,771	74,284	82,147	85,488	90,642	91,309	97,018	104,174	108,211
Non built-up roads[2]									
Pedestrians									
Killed	396	378	359	347	364	341	340	311	337
KSI	1,709	1,586	1,576	1,524	1,461	1,381	1,354	1,245	1,273
All severities	3,323	3,082	3,115	2,958	2,793	2,769	2,765	2,581	2,614
Pedal cyclists									
Killed	107	137	156	120	120	112	85	117	104
KSI	1,219	1,207	1,286	1,090	1,026	942	843	926	850
All severities	3,152	3,183	3,387	2,928	2,861	2,774	2,615	2,910	2,717
Motorcyclists									
Killed	497	445	444	371	363	322	334	361	346
KSI	7,044	6,240	5,844	4,878	4,814	4,046	3,784	3,935	3,588
All severities	14,156	14,234	13,851	12,196	11,244	9,836	9,283	9,638	8,942
Car Users									
Killed	1,753	1,438	1,548	1,471	1,670	1,651	1,655	1,892	1,841
KSI	19,378	15,915	16,899	16,778	17,681	16,695	17,276	17,861	17,467
All severities	63,116	56,122	61,472	63,963	68,532	68,156	73,680	80,490	82,307

[1] Excludes drivers and passengers of LGV, HGV, PSV and other vehicles.
[2] Includes motorways.

School Buses

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received about the regulation allowing three children below the age of 14 years to occupy a two-seater bench in a school bus; and if he will revoke this regulation.

Mr. Chope: In the last 12 months we have received about 30 representations about the concession which allows three seated children under the age of 14 to count as two passengers.

There are no plans to change the regulations at present.

Fishing Vessels

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library his Department's reports into the incidents involving the snagging of fishing nets by the Royal Navy or NATO craft on 18 February 1987, Summer Mourne, 16 September 1987, Heroine, 6 December 1987, Prevail, 27 October 1988, Brilliant Star, 3 December 1988, Mount Eden, 17 April 1989, Laurel, 28 June 1989, Huntress, 12 September 1989, Contestor and 13 November 1989, Scotia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Reports into shipping accidents enable the Department to establish the cause of the accident and to consider what further action is required in the interest of marine safety. Before the setting up of the marine accident investigation branch—MAIB—in July 1989 there was no provision for making reports available for general release, unless the accident was subject to public inquiry. None of the incidents listed by the hon. Member led to such an inquiry.

With the setting up of the MAIB, provision has specifically been made in the relevant regulations for the reports of investigations submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport under the terms of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 to be published. However, such investigations are usually reserved for serious accidents involving loss of life and the incident involving MFV Scotia did not come under this head. The MAIB has no record of the incident involving MFV Contestor on 12 September 1989. The hon. Member will be aware that it is the intention to publish the report of the chief inspector into the sinking of the Antares. Copies of that report will be placed in the Library.

Environmental Assessments

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the dates he received letters from the European Commission, and the dates of his replies, in respect of the environmental assessment of the M3 Bar End-Compton, the east London river crossing and the Hackney-M11 link road, respectively.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* The dates of the Commission's letters and the dates on which replies were forwarded to the United Kingdom permanent representative in Brussels are as follows:

	Commission's letter	*Response*
M3 Bar End-Compton	26 March 1991	21 May 1991
East London River Crossing	24 October 1989	20 December 1989
Hackney-M11 Link Road	21 June 1990	8 August 1990

The article 169 letter was received on 17 October 1991.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received a copy of a faxed letter from the European Commission to Mr. Peter Kunzlik of Hammond Suddards relating to the issuing by the Commission of an article 169 letter in respect of the M3 Bar End-Compton.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* A copy of this letter was sent to officials on 29 August 1991 by a private individual.

London Docklands (Byelaws)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what byelaw-making powers the docklands light railway and the London Docklands development corporation respectively have; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* London Transport byelaws currently apply on the docklands light railway. In the ownership of the London Docklands development corporation, the docklands light railway would have powers as an independent railway undertaking to make byelaws under section 67 of the Transport Act 1962 as applied by section 84 of that Act. The London Docklands development corporation does not itself have byelaw-making powers.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown of the planned expenditure on *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* current maintenance on trunk roads by his Department for the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* Provisional plans for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are in the Department of Transport's report for 1991, Cm. 1507. Decisions on any reallocation of provision for these years and on the allocation of the resources available for 1994-95 following the autumn statement have yet to be made.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration and Asylum

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place copies of all correspondence and the minutes or notes of all meetings or discussions between Ministers and officials in his Department, and representatives of United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service on the subject of the proposed withdrawal of legal aid for immigration and asylum matters in the Library.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Nationality Applications

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of staff within his Department who deal solely with applications for British nationality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at the end of October 1991, 163½.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisons in England and Wales holding category A prisoners on 1 November.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty-three.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of category A prisoners in prisons in the United Kingdom as of 1 November.

Mrs. Rumbold: Six hundred and two in England and Wales. The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and in Northern Ireland for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the review by the prison service into the current policy for the classification and treatment of remand prisoners, at present given a provisional category A classification, is complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This review is being finalised in the light of a security audit conducted by Mr. G. H. Lakes CB, MC, former deputy director general of the Prison Service and Mr. R. Hadfield QPM, chief constable of the West Midlands police, into arrangements for holding and managing category A prisoners. The audit report was received by my right hon. Friend on 1 November and is currently being considered.

Naturalisation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the numbers of applications received for naturalisation for each of the months in the current year and the number currently outstanding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applications for naturalisation received in the nationality division's caseworking groups in each month of this year is as follows:

Month	*Number*
January	1,514
February	1,274
March	1,430
April	1,056
May	1,288
June	1,397
July	1,177
August	1,250
September	1,403
October	1,774

In addition, there are approximately 5,500 applications of all types for citizenship awaiting allocation to caseworkers.

As at 12 November 1991, the number of applications for naturalisation awaiting determination was 45,081.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time it takes to deal with a naturalisation case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For the certificates of naturalisation issued in October 1991, 31 months.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to open additional offices dealing with naturalisation and immigration cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None at present.

Aldington Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will visit Aldington prison to discuss its future with the governor and prison officers.

Mrs. Rumbold: I hope to visit Aldington prison, but no date has yet been fixed.

Central European Time

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to move to central European time;

(2) what estimate he has made of the effect of a move to central European time on the young, the elderly, outdoor leisure pursuits and the business community.

Mrs. Rumbold: The effects of a move to central European time were discussed in the Green Paper "Summer Time: A Consultation Document" Cm722, to which I refer my hon. Friend. The responses to the Green Paper revealed considerable differences of opinion within the United Kingdom about the options for future summer time arrangements. Policy on those arrangements therefore remains under consideration.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those EC member states which are not on central European time.

Mrs. Rumbold: Greece, Portugal, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Staff Vacancies

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vacancies he has in each grade at Lunar house, Croydon and the Liverpool nationality office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 30 September there were three vacant posts in the immigration and nationality department in Croydon, and 16 in the nationality division in Liverpool, as against planned targets. Most of the vacancies were in the grades of executive and higher executive officer. The 16 posts in Liverpool will be filled before the end of the financial year. Additional posts are being created and additional staff recruited to the immigration and nationality department, in particular to meet the needs of increased asylum work.

Circuses (Wild Animals)

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will introduce legislation to ban the use of wild animals in circuses;

(2) if he will introduce regulations to prevent wild animals in circuses from being ill treated or from being confined for long periods.

Mrs. Rumbold: Circus animals are protected by the Protection of Animals Act 1911 as well as the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925. These Acts together provide for, among other things, the registration of trainers, the inspection of premises by local authorities and the prosecution of anyone who causes any animal unnecessary suffering. This gives animals both general and specific protection and we have no plans for further legislation.

Prison Building

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of the new prisons due to be opened in each of the next five years as a result of his Department's prison building programme; and if he will give the location of each prison and the number of places to be provided.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twelve prisons constructed under this Government's prison building programme have been opened to date. The remaining prisons in the programme are currently estimated to come into operation as follows:

Prison	*Location*	*Type*	*Number of places*
1992			
Elmley	Sheppey, Kent	Training prison	620
Bullingdon	Arncot, Bicester, Oxfordshire	Local prison	649
Wolds	Brough, North Humberside	Remand prison	320
Holme House	Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland	Local prison	649
Woodhill	Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire	Local prison	579
High Down	Banstead, Surrey	Local prison	649
Blakenhurst	Redditch, Worcestershire	Local prison	649
Lancaster Farms	Lancaster	Young offender institution	374
1994			
Doncaster	Doncaster, South Yorkshire	Local prison	779

Police Cells

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current cost of keeping a prisoner in a police cell for one night.

Mrs. Rumbold: The current average daily cost of keeping a prisoner in a police cell is £221.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners held in police cells on the last day for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 15 November, the latest date for which figures are available, 1,640 prisoners were held in police cells.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost for the most recent 10-year period for which figures are available of keeping remand prisoners in police cells; and what is the comparable figure for keeping them in prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: The costs for each complete financial year since 1981-82 of holding prisoners in police cells are given in the table.

Financial year	*Actual cost £ million*
1981-82	—
1982-83	3·4
1983-84	10·8
1984-85	3·4
1985-86	2·2
1986-87	6·2
1987-88	24·9
1988-89	64·9
1989-90	12·4
1990-91	53·5

In 1990-91 the comparable cost of holding the prisoners in Prison Service establishments would have been £14·8 million. Figures for previous financial years are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that prisoners are placed in prisons nearest to their homes with particular reference to prisoners from Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Rumbold: In Prison Service establishments in England and Wales, the inmate's home area is taken into account when allocating him or her to a training prison following sentence. It is also open to a sentenced inmate to request a transfer, for example to make it easier for relatives to visit.

Prisoners normally serve their sentences in the jurisdiction in which they were convicted. However, the Criminal Justice Act 1961 provides that a prisoner may be transferred to another United Kingdom jurisdiction on request. Requests are considered under criteria announced to the House on 23 June 1989. A review of these arrangements is in hand in consultation with the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

Hewell Grange

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the institutions to which 102 young offenders were transferred from Hewell Grange during September 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: During September 1991 a total of 102 young offenders were transferred from Hewell Grange to other open young offender institutions at Prescoed (Usk), Finnamore Wood camp, Hollesley Bay Colony, Thorn Cross and Hatfield. This enabled Hewell Grange to convert from a young offender institution to a category D open prison for adult males.

Car Thefts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to introduce legislation to tackle the problem of young people under 17 years stealing cars.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 7 November at column *229*.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands regarding the progress of the investigation into the Birmingham pub bombings following the release of the Birmingham Six; how many officers are engaged in the inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. These are matters for the chief constable of the West Midlands.

Riots

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the amount of damages paid by police authorities to residents in Brixton, the St. Paul's area of Bristol and Toxteth for damage to property following riots in those areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Receiver for the Metropolitan police district, the Avon and Somerset and the Merseyside county councils were the relevant compensation authorities for claims under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 arising from the disorders in Brixton, Bristol and Toxteth in 1981. The Home Office was not involved in the processing of claims.

Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis detailing what charges have now been brought against Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi; where he is being detained; and whether police inquiries have been completed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the commissioner that Mr. Bedi has been charged with conspiracy to defraud the Secretary of State in respect of false asylum claims and with conspiracy to defraud financial institutions in relation to mortgage applications; that he has been remanded in custody to Her Majesty's prison Brixton but is currently undergoing treatment in Kings College hospital; and that the police inquiries into his activities have been completed.

Police Inquiries

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from *(a)* the chief constable of Devon and Cornwall as to the cost of each of the two investigations into the Birmingham Six and *(b)* the chief constable of West Yorkshire as to the cost of the inquiry into the West Midlands serious crimes squad; and how these bills are to be met.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. These are matters for the chief constables and police authorities of the forces involved.

Drug Dealers

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the monetary value of assets which have been sequestrated from drugs dealers over the past five years; how the money has been used; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will direct that the sequestrated or confiscated assets of convicted drugs dealers are invested back into the communities where the dealers operated, and specifically devoted to local schools and anti-drugs projects.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The latest figures, which are in respect of confiscation orders made in 1987, 1988 and 1989, are given in table 7.25 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1989", a copy of which is in the Library. These show that over £17 million was ordered to be confiscated in those years. The current estimate by the national drugs intelligence unit of the cumulative total of confiscation orders made since the Drugs Trafficking Offences Act came into force in January 1987, up to the end of 1990, is in excess of £27 million.

Under present public accounting arrangements confiscated money is treated in the same way as fine revenue, and paid directly into the Consolidated Fund from which Government expenditure generally—including substantial support for drug-related work—is financed.

In April 1991, my right hon. Friend announced that assets confiscated here under drug confiscation agreements

with other countries will be recycled, through a new fund, to support work against drug misuse. Any gifts to the United Kingdom from overseas Governments, made in recognition of our co-operation in international investigations, will also be available to the fund. The fund will be available for one-off projects to help in the fight against drug misuse, either in the United Kingdom or abroad. Projects may include special investigations or equipment for the police service or HM Customs and Excise, education publicity, and treatment and rehabilitation. The first payments from the fund will be made in April 1992. We hope to announce shortly the list of projects to be funded from this source.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Begging and Sleeping Rough

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were *(a)* prosecuted for begging, *(b)* convicted of begging, *(c)* prosecuted for sleeping rough and *(d)* convicted of sleeping rough in each police district in Northern Ireland in the year ending 31 December 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: Six persons were prosecuted and convicted of begging in Northern Ireland during 1990. All six incidents occurred within the Belfast area. There were no prosecutions or convictions for sleeping rough.

Terrorist-related Offences

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual clear-up rate for terrorist-related offences since 1970; and if he will give a breakdown according to paramilitary affiliation so far as available.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 November 1991]:* The table details the total number of notifiable offences known and cleared and the detection rate in Northern Ireland since 1970:

Year	*Known*	*Cleared*	*Detection Rate percentage*
1970	24,810	10,069	40·6
1971	30,828	9,822	31·9
1972	35,884	7,525	21
1973	32,057	8,850	27·6
1974	33,314	9,676	29
1975	37,239	7,771	20·9
1976	39,779	9,367	23·5
1977	45,335	9,940	21·9
1978	45,335	10,535	23·2
1979	54,262	11,308	20·8
1980	56,316	14,391	25·6
1981	62,496	16,802	26·9
1982	62,020	11,768	19
1983	63,984	17,775	27·8
1984	66,779	20,491	30·7
1985	64,584	22,581	35
1986	68,255	25,336	37·1
1987	63,860	27,743	43·4
1988	55,890	25,226	45·1
1989	55,147	23,808	43·2
1990	57,198	21,475	37·5

Information regarding the detection rate for terrorist-related offences is not available.

Security Force Operations (Deaths)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the total number of people who have died since 1970 during security force operations; how many of these people were members of a paramilitary organisation; and if he will list their affiliations.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 November 1991]:* Since 1970 a total of 299 persons have been killed in Northern Ireland by the security forces. It is not possible to state how many of these persons were members of a paramilitary organisation.

PRIME MINISTER

United Nations Environment Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what report has been prepared on progress made at the seminar held on 9 and 10 October, sponsored by the United Kingdom and the United Nations Environment Programme, on the role of United Kingdom non-governmental organisations in the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in June 1992.

The Prime Minister: The Department of the Environment is currently providing financial assistance through the United Nations Environment Programme-United Kingdom for a series of non-governmental meetings and seminars in preparation for the 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development.

The report on this seminar will be an important contribution to the preparatory process for the conference. The United Nations Environment Programme-United Kingdom committee is currently preparing the report and it should be published by the end of January 1992.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government intend to put forward at the fourth preparatory committee meeting for the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held early next year.

The Prime Minister: The Government are currently considering their plans for next year's fourth preparatory committee meeting for the United Nations conference on environment and development.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make it his policy to appoint a woman to succeed Lord Charteris of Amisfield as chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund; whether he has received any representations to this effect; and whether he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I expect shortly to announce a successor to Lord Charteris of Amisfield, whose term as chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund ends on 31 March 1992. I have received confidential advice from a number of quarters, and the final choice will depend on the aptitude and relevant experience of available candidates of either sex.

Museum and Gallery Trustees

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will take powers to remove from office trustees of national museums and galleries who have been convicted of serious offences; and whether he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans at present to take such powers.

EC Powers

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to veto any extension of EC competence into economic policy and economic advice.

The Prime Minister: The Government support the co-ordination of member states' economic policies. A process of multilateral surveillance of national economic policies has been established under the 1990 convergence decision, under which the Council of Ministers can publish non-binding recommendations directed at particular member states. The Government have argued in the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union that treaty provisions must be consistent with the principle that member states should retain primary responsibility on economic policy.

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to veto any extension of EC competence into the field of social security.

The Prime Minister: Some limited EC competence in the field of social security already exists in article 51 of the current treaty of Rome. The Government see no case for any further extension.

Women Cabinet Members

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to have women in his Cabinet.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* I look forward to appointing a woman to my Cabinet from amongst the strong group of women Ministers in the Government. There are excellent candidates among the six Ministers of State.

ENERGY

Wave Energy

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to appoint a replacement for Mr. J. E. Marrow on his Department's study team on wave energy; and if he will make a statement on the composition of the team.

Mr. Moynihan: In the early stages of the wave energy review, Mr. J. E. Marrow and Dr. T. Thorpe worked part time in support of the work of the steering group. Since then, Dr. Thorpe has been engaged full time on the review and as the methodology evolved the emphasis has moved to use of consultants for specific aspects of the work.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish the results of the 1989 United Kingdom study announced by the then Minister of State, Baroness Hooper, on 6 April 1989.

Mr. Moynihan: The steering group reviewing wave energy is due to complete its work at the end of the year. Two progress reports were circulated in 1990 to the wave energy community and an interim report will be published shortly. A final report is expected to be published early in 1992.

Coal Imports

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the amount of coal imported for each year since 1979, from Poland, Colombia, South Africa and Bolivia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is as follows:

(thousand tonnes)

	Country of Origin			
	Poland	*Colombia*[1]	*South Africa*	*Bolivia*
1979	658	—	38	—
1980	446	—	66	—
1981	142	—	80	—
1982	320	—	67	—
1983	509	—	58	—
1984	1,359	—	257	—
1985	1,418	89	725	—
1986	1,217	56	312	—
1987	1,083	319	188	—
1988	1,270	574	276	—
1989	1,055	874	346	—
1990	1,043	1,506	356	—
[2]1991	411	1,857	438	—

[1] Some imports previously recorded by Customs and Excise as originating in the Netherlands have been re-allocated to other countries including Colombia. This re-allocation has been carried out for 1991 and an estimate of Colombian imports previously classified to the Netherlands has been included for 1990. Figures for earlier years have not been re-allocated.
[2] January to September.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mining Accidents

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list *(a)* the number of miners employed by British Coal, *(b)* the number of the work force employed in opencast mining and *(c)* the number of fatal accidents and injuries in British Coal mines and opencast mines for each year since 1980.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that British Coal currently employes approximately 54,000 colliery industrial workers. British Coal does not collect details of the number of people employed by the opencast coal industry, but an approximate total, taking into account those employed directly and indirectly at British Coal's contract sites and licensed opencast sites, is likely to be in the order of 17,000. Information on the number of fatal accidents and major injuries in the coal industry is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what consultations he has had with retailers of white goods concerning the introduction of a voluntary energy efficiency labelling scheme for refrigerators, freezers and other domestic electrical appliances; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has had with *(a)* the Electricity Association, *(b)* the 12 regional electricity companies' chairmen and *(c)* the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances concerning a voluntary labelling scheme for domestic freezers and refrigerators and other domestic electrical appliances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: On 5 October last year the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), called a meeting of representatives of retailers, the electricity industry, manufacturers and consumers to discuss the findings of a report on the energy efficiency of domestic electric appliances which had been prepared for my Energy Efficiency Office. At that meeting my EEO proposed that a voluntary energy efficiency labelling scheme should be developed. Subsequently, my Energy Efficiency Office consulted the chairmen of the regional electricity companies and the Electricity Association who agreed to proceed with the development of a voluntary scheme. My officials recently met the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances to discuss the scheme and have written to major manufacturers and retailers of domestic appliances to fully inform them of the scheme and invite them to participate.

All 15 electricity supply companies have agreed to participate and the scheme was launched, by the Secretary of State on 12 November.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to introduce compulsory energy rating schemes for dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's intention is that home energy labelling should be sufficiently developed to enable it to be incorporated into the Building Regulations when these are next amended. In the mean time, it is one of the aims of the Government's publicity campaign, with the title "Helping the Earth Begins at Home", to encourage the take-up of home energy labels. The Government will be discussing with the commission and other member states EC proposals on home energy labelling in the context of the SAVE programme.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assistance his Department is prepared to give to local authorities to encourage them to improve heating efficiency in all their dwellings to achieve a good score on the energy rating scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government, under the Department of the Environment's greenhouse energy efficiency demonstration programme, are providing £60 million over three years for selected projects to improve the energy efficiency of local authority housing stock. More widely, the Department of the Environment's estate action programme provides local authorities with additional resources to improve their housing estates. In 1990-91 some 20 per cent. of the estate action budget, representing some £35 million, was geared towards energy efficiency improvements.

In addition, my Energy Efficiency Office's best practice programme is providing assistance in the form of technical advice, information and guidance to local authorities through its publications, workshops and seminars.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the energy directorate of the European Commission concerning the introduction of a directive on the relative energy efficiency of domestic electrical appliances; and what is the likeliest date for its introduction for *(a)* freezers and refrigerators and *(b)* other domestic electrical appliances.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department has been fully consulted by the European Commission on its proposals for a directive on the indication by labelling and standard product information of the consumption of energy and other resources of household appliances. The proposed directive is a framework directive which sets out the procedures to be adopted by member states to ensure that domestic appliances displayed for sale bear energy labels which give potential purchasers information on the energy consumption of the appliances.

There is at present no timetable for discussions on the preparation of the subsequent implementing directives which will set out specific requirements for energy labels for individual types of appliance. However, it is expected that freezers and refrigerators will be one of the first types of appliance to be covered by an implementing directive and this is likely to be ready for introduction early in 1993. Other domestic appliances will be dealt with quickly thereafter.

My Energy Efficiency Office has therefore worked with the regional electricity companies—RECs—to introduce a voluntary energy labelling scheme which was launched on 12 November. Refrigerators and freezers in all the RECs' showrooms will by now bear energy labels that tell customers how efficient the appliance is compared to similar appliances and how much electricity it will use in a year.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has commissioned a comparative energy audit of incineration of material solid waste and separation of waste at source followed by recycling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The choice between waste management options should be based on an assessment of all the associated costs and benefits, and not just on the cost of energy. The Government are continuously reviewing these options. Waste management paper No. 1 provides advice on how the costs and benefits should be assessed. This paper is currently being revised.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the public assets which he intends to privatise to reach the £8 billion income from sales outlined in his autumn statement.

Mr. Maude: The Government expect £8 billion of proceeds in 1992-93. The precise components of the forecast are subject to future decisions on, inter alia, the balance between debt and equity proceeds.

National Heritage Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the exchequer if he will list the circumstances under which landowners are released from their obligation to comply with their undertakings for which they have been granted exemptions from inheritance tax for national heritage land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: There are no circumstances in which landowners are released from their undertakings and continue to benefit from conditional exemption. If an undertaking is broken or comes to an end on the disposal of the heritage property, inheritance tax is normally chargeable, except in the case of a gift or bequest where the new owner gives a fresh undertaking.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the organisations to which he supplies information about the land which is granted exemption from inheritance tax for national heritage land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest; from what date they are able to give this information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Where a claim is made for conditional exemption the Inland Revenue consults the relevant heritage advisory body. The main advisory bodies for land in England and Scotland are the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, and for land of scientific interest the respective Nature Conservancy Councils. In Wales and Northern Ireland the relevant bodies are the Countryside Council for Wales and the environment service of the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland. Information about individual cases is covered by the normal rules of tax confidentiality. However heritage bodies are able to supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land, although land will not be identified as conditionally exempt.

Tobacco

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast revenue from tobacco taxes in 1991-92.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Revenue from excise duties on tobacco is forecast to be £6·1 billion for 1991-92.

Debt

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the figure for the annual amount of corporate debt in the United Kingdom for each year from 1978-79 *(a)* expressed in actual terms and *(b)* expressed at current prices;

(2) what was the annual amount of personal debt in the United Kingdom for each year from 1978-79 *(a)* expressed in actual terms and *(b)* expressed at current prices.

Mr. Mellor: The figures, on a calendar year basis, are as follows. Financial year figures are not readily available.

Total liabilities at market values
(£ billion, end of year)

	Industrial and commercial companies		*Personal sector*[1]	
	Real terms[2]	*Current prices*	*Real terms*[2]	*Current prices*
1978	404·1	165·2	159·2	65·1
1979	396·5	189·8	164·4	78·7
1980	390·4	218·4	163·2	91·3
1981	415·8	247·0	184·5	109·6
1982	460·0	292·5	202·9	129·0
1983	513·2	341·9	229·2	152·7
1984	571·1	402·3	252·8	178·1
1985	621·0	455·8	282·6	207·4
1986	744·2	562·3	321·5	242·9
1987	800·6	640·7	357·9	286·4
1988	861·8	744·4	397·2	343·1
1989	1,017·7	936·3	430·7	396·2
1990	929·5	929·5	441·7	441·7

[1] Includes unincorporated businesses and non-profit making bodies serving persons as well as individuals.
[2] End-1990 prices based on the GDP(E) at factor cost implied deflator.

Public Services (Opinion Poll)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to the opinion poll he has commissioned to investigate public attitudes towards public services, if he will indicate *(a)* how much the survey will cost, *(b)* how many members of the public will be involved in the survey, *(c)* when he expects the questionnaire to be finalised, *(d)* when he expects the survey to be completed and *(e)* when the results will be published.

Mr. Maude: I have not yet commissioned an opinion survey.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *501*, what was the net effect of each of the changes set out in the Chief Secretary's answer of 12 November in each month since it was introduced.

Mr. Mellor: Following is the available information:

(a) Adjustments to statistics of oil exports: Prior to October 1989 direct exports of crude oil were under-recorded in Customs and Excise data, and in the trade figures published by the Central Statistical Office, by amounts which average £40 million—440,000 tonnes—per month in the first three quarters of 1989. Since October 1989 this under-recording has been eliminated, but some oil exports are still reported with a delay. The Central Statistical Office therefore includes in its statistics estimates of the amount of exports still to be reported. The adjustments for the latest month have averaged £12½ million—120,000 tonnes—per month over the last three months.

(b) Improved seasonal adjustments: Some indication of the impact of regularly updating seasonal adjustment factors can be obtained by comparing the adjusted figures initially published for each month with the revised figures published a month later, though these revisions also incorporate any necessary amendments to raw data. Since January 1990 when the regular updating was initiated the revisions to the balance of visible trade, irrespective of sign, have averaged £30 million per month.

(c) Progressive development of detailed methodology: The various refinements referred to in the earlier reply are such that they have been integrated into the monthly cycle of processing and without

retrospectively reconstructing the statistics using the old methodology it is impossible to determine what their effect has been.

£20 Note

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the size of the new £20 note.

Mr. Maples: I have received a number of letters concerning the size of the new £20 note. However the size and design of banknotes is the responsibility of the Bank of England.

Contracted-out Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on extending contracting-out of services in central Government and the national health service; and if he will list those individual services his Department considers most suitable for putting out to tender.

Mr. Maude: This information is given in the White Paper "Competing for Quality" which is published today.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

31. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to increase resources for the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General: I announced on 6 November increased funding of £1·07 million for the SFO in the current financial year in view of the additional demands placed upon it by the BCCI case. Subject to parliamentary approval, expenditure provision of an additional £5·4 million has also been agreed for the SFO for1992-93.

Women Judges

33. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps the Government are taking to ensure that more women are appointed to high judicial office.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has repeatedly made clear his wish to appoint more suitably qualified women to judicial office. The number of women in the legal profession in the appropriate age groups and with the right experience will increase significantly over time and will undoubtedly lead to the welcome appointment of more women judges.

Immigration Cases

32. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the length of the waiting time for the hearing of immigration cases.

The Attorney-General: It is estimated that at present an average appeal to an adjudicator is determined within five to 12 months of its receipt by the immigration appellate authorities. This includes the time taken by the parties themselves to prepare for the hearing, which is typically between two and six months.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies there are for solicitors and barristers at the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service currently has 231·5 vacancies for lawyers, in a revised total manpower requirement of 2,136. A total of 112 legal trainees are in post.

Judges

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* circuit judges and *(c)* registrars of county courts are at present in office; and how many of them are (i) black, (ii) Asian and (iii) women.

The Attorney-General: The information requested, at 1 November 1991, is set out in the table. Records are not held on the ethnic origins of all office holders, but the numbers relating to black and Asian origin are believed to be as given.

	In office	*Black*	*Asian*	*Women*
High Court judges	82	—	—	2
Circuit judges	450	—	2	20
County Court District judges[1]	230	—	—	10

[1]From 1 January 1991 the title of County Court Registrar was changed to District Judge.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to bring about a reduction in the length of time taken to conclude immigration appeals; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The workload of the immigration appellate authorities—IAA—has increased significantly in recent years. There was a 60 per cent. increase in 1988, 30 per cent. in 1989, 30 per cent. in 1990 and the increase for 1991 is projected to be 15 to 20 per cent. In response to these increases, the Lord Chancellor's Department has recruited additional staff and part-time adjudicators for the IAA to help keep waiting times for cases to be determined to a minimum. The Lord Chancellor's Department has also installed a multi-terminal case-tracking system at Thanet house in London and this will be operational by January 1992. This system will allow the IAA to monitor accurately and frequently the movement of appeals and so assist in the efficient disposal of cases, and help reduce waiting times for cases to be determined.

Furthermore, the Government intend to create a right of appeal for asylum seekers refused refugee status. The draft asylum appeals procedure rules set out the procedure and timetable envisaged for asylum appeals, and the recruitment of additional staff and adjudicators will facilitate their speedy and efficient disposal.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many people are awaiting hearings at the immigration appeals tribunal.

The Attorney-General: As at 31 October 1991, a total of 547 appellants were awaiting a hearing before the immigration appeal tribunal. This figure represents 389 cases.

Sara Thornton

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Attorney-General if he will arrange for a copy of the judgment in R *v.* Thornton, Court of Appeal, 29 July 1991 to be placed in the Library.

The Attorney-General: I have, as requested, arranged for a copy of the judgment in R *v.* Thornton, Court of Appeal, 29 July 1991 to be placed in the Library.

WALES

GCSE

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has made any assessment of GCSE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department provided financial support for a study by University college, Swansea, of the impact of the General Certificate of Secondary Education on the teaching of history, geography and Welsh. The university published its findings earlier this year and I believe the study is a valuable contribution to the pool of knowledge about the teaching of GCSE. I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the report and arrange also for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Training Expenditure

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of expenditure on *(a)* youth training and *(b)* employment training in 1991-92; and what is his estimate for each of these programmes in 1992-93 in actual and real terms.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of expenditure on youth training and employment training in 1991-92 should be available soon. Provision for expenditure on these programmes in Wales for 1992-93 has not yet been determined and an announcement will be made in due course.

Unemployment

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps will be taken to reduce unemployment in north Pembrokeshire during next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department, the Welsh Development Agency and other Government agencies operate a wide range of measures aimed at combating unemployment. The Welsh Office and all the other bodies will continue to look for and respond swiftly to opportunities that arise which have the potential to reduce unemployment.

I have asked particularly that the Welsh Development Agency and the West Wales training and enterprise council look together at action which needs to be taken, in consultation with the local authorities, to alleviate the effects of the proposed closure of Royal Navy armaments depot Trecwn.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much of the additional money announced for home improvement grants will be available for discretionary grant applications in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: With the £80 million additional resources which my right hon. Friend announced last week, the provision for mandatory home renovation grants next year will be £143 million. Further provision will be made for local authority spending on discretionary grants. My right hon. Friend will be announcing details of Welsh local authority capital programmes in due course.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of applicants for home improvement grants who did not qualify after losing community charge benefit.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No application for house renovation grant will have become ineligible for assistance as a result of losing community charge benefit.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* mandatory and *(b)* discretionary home improvement grants were made in Wales in 1989, 1990, and his latest estimate of the number for 1991; and how much these grants have cost.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The grants system based on the Housing Act 1985 was replaced by that of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in July 1990, from which time approvals for grants were made only under the new Act. However, since then, a number of grants already approved under the old Act have been completed. The numbers and amounts of completed mandatory and discretionary home improvement grants under the old and new Acts are given in the table:

Grant completions under the Housing Act 1985

	Mandatory (intermediate)		*Discretionary (improvement, repair and special)*	
	Number	*Amount (£)*	*Number*	*Amount (£)*
1989	2,511	6,954,543	17,563	58,889,413
1990	2,172	6,195,853	22,940	77,722,006
1991	665	2,203,782	6,801	29,891,532

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Grant completions under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

	Mandatory		*Discretionary*	
	Number	*Amount (£)*	*Number*	*Amount (£)*
[1]1990	55	329,138	78	62,171
[2]1991	900	6,962,429	105	885,786

[1]Covers the period July to December 1990.
[2]Covers the period January to June 1991.
Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Smoking

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he intends to take to curb smoking among teenage girls in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales—HPAW—features the prevention of smoking predominantly in its Youth Life Wales programme, which includes support for school health education and other youth sector projects. Two life education centres are currently touring schools throughout the Principality. The authority also contributes, along with ASH in Wales and Tenovous cancer information centre, to the running of Smokebusters Wales/Mygu Mwg Cymru. This anti-smoking project was launched on 30 October 1991 and is aimed at children between the ages of nine and 13. The Department is supporting the project financially.

The HPAW in association with other organisations has mounted a number of national and local campaigns including No Smoking Day in Wales. The authority also encourages public transport operators and the retail and catering trade to provide no-smoking areas, to help to create supportive environments which discourage smoking.

Much sterling work with young people is also being carried out by district health promotion units of district health authorities. My Department also provides financial support for ASH in Wales.

More generally, it is an offence to sell cigarettes to anyone under 16 years of age and the Government are examining means of tightening up the law on illegal sales.

House Repossessions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes have been repossessed as a result of mortgage payment defaults *(a)* in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, *(b)* in Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* in Wales in 1990 and the latest number known for 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Only the total numbers of warrants of repossession are available; those relating specifically to mortgages are not collected separately. However, separate data are available on the number of repossession orders made following mortgage actions. The numbers given in the table relate to totals of orders made through courts within an area and as such do not correspond directly to the number of homes within that area on which orders were made.

Repossession orders made following mortgage actions[1]

	1990	*1991 (January to September)*
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney[2]	253	315
Mid Glamorgan	1,170	1,203
Wales	4,962	5,388

[1] Figures include suspended orders, whereby the mortgagees are given an opportunity to clear their debts.
[2] Total of orders made through the courts of Bargoed, Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil.
Source: Lord Chancellor's Department.

Caravans (Parking)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he is having with local authorities in mid-Wales regarding the overnight parking facilities for touring caravans in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None, except in respect of a request to issue directions to Powys county council under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 in relation to gipsy sites.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many overnight parking sites there are in Wales for touring caravans; what were the corresponding figures for 1970 and 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally except in relation to gipsy sites. There are currently two transit sites for gipsies in Wales; one at Welshpool and one at Llandegai near Bangor. Comparable figures for 1970 and 1980 are not available.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many caravan sites there are in Cardiganshire; what are the corresponding figures for 1965, 1975 and 1985, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally except in relation to gipsy sites. Statistics supplied by the local authority show that there were no authorised gipsy sites in Ceredigion district in July 1985 or in July 1991. No figures are available for 1965 or 1975.

Universities

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has made to help Welsh university colleges meet the demands of increased numbers of students expected in the next five years in terms of *(a)* capital available for buildings and *(b)* staffing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The existing system of funding the universities has enabled a higher proportion of young people to enter universities by providing an incentive to institutions to expand efficiently. The proposals set out earlier this year in the White Paper "Higher Education —A New Framework" are aimed at ensuring that the higher education sector, as a whole in Wales, is better placed to meet the increased demands that will be put on it over the rest of this decade and beyond: under our proposals detailed decisions about future funding will be taken by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in Wales for which management agreements are currently being negotiated, giving details of the damage threatened in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not held centrally, and is treated as confidential by the parties to the agreement.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance is given to the Welsh Development Agency about identifying and handling possible conflicts of interest in the employment of consultants where one of the principals in the consultancy is employed in a senior capacity by the Welsh Development Agency; and if he has any plans to revise this advice.

Mr. David Hunt: Current guidance is contained in "Non Departmental Public Bodies: A guide for Departments". The WDA staff rules on the disclosures of possible conflicts of interest comply with the guide. The guide is kept under review.

Pembrokeshire Health Authority

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *415*, how many representations he has received supporting the application for national health service trust status from Pembrokeshire health authority.

Mr. David Hunt: Thirty-one respondents have written in to support the application, with a further 21 expressing no clear opinion.

Departmental Land Holdings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the hectarage, number of holdings and numbers of tenants of holdings of agricultural land owned by his Ministry in each county in Wales in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 6 November 1991]:* The information is shown in the table:

	1980		1990		
	Area of holding to nearest hectare	*Number of holdings*	*Area of holding to nearest hectare*	*Number of holdings*	*Number of tenants*
Clwyd	159	5	19	3	3
Dyfed	32	5	2	1	1
Gwent	32	2	2	1	1
Gwynedd	60	3	32	1	1
Mid Glamorgan	24	2	27	3	3
Powys	13	3	34	7	6
South Glamorgan	12	2	8	1	1
West Glamorgan	26	2	—	—	—

Information on the number of tenants in 1980 is not available.

The substantial decrease between 1980 and 1990 in the amount of land owned or held by the Secretary of State reflects the ongoing process of rationalisation by the Department to ensure disposal of any land or property which is surplus to requirements.

In addition in 1990 the Secretary of State owned or held on long lease the following three holdings at the Pwllpeiran experimental husbandry farm in Dyfed:

	Hectares
Holding 1	647·47
Holding 2 (999 year lease)	[1]318·6
Holding 3	[1]58·2

[1]Managed by Forestry Commission.

Information on land held in 1980 for experimental purposes could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry Commission land in Wales is vested in the Secretary of State. A total of 11,000 hectares of agricultural land were held in 1980.

Figures for 1990 are:

	Number
Area	4,467
Number of tenancies	100
Number of grazing lets	48

Information is not kept centrally on the number of holdings or the distribution by county. This information and a breakdown of the 1980 figure could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Statistics

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on *(a)* the establishment and *(b)* the actual numbers of district nurses, midwives and health visitors practising in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* Complete information on staff numbers is available only for all nursing and midwifery staff, and not for occupational groups such as district nurses, midwives and health visitors. At 31 September 1991, the whole-time equivalent number of nursing and midwifery staff in Wales was 27,991. Information on establishment is not available centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textile and Footware Factories

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* footwear factories and *(b)* textile factories he has visited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Leigh: My ministerial colleagues and I have regular contact with representatives of the footwear and textile industries and have visited several factories over the past year.

Post Office

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans he has to privatise Post Office Counters Ltd;

(2) what plans he has to privatise Parcelforce;

(3) what plans he has to privatise Post Office Letters.

Mr. Lilley: I have no present plans to privatise the Post Office or any constituent part of it.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the real unit cost target for 1992 in respect of the Post Office.

Mr. Lilley: The Government set efficiency targets in the form of a cumulative percentage change in real unit costs —RUC—for Royal Mail Letters and for Post Office Counters Ltd., but not for Parcelforce, in recognition of the strongly competitive environment in which it operates.

The current RUC targets relating to the three-year period 1989-90 to 1991-92 are minus 1 per cent. for Royal Mail and minus 2 per cent. for Counters. New targets for 1992-93 onwards have not yet been set.

Deregulation Unit

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many regulations were abolished as a result of an initiative taken by his Department's deregulation unit over the latest 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The deregulation unit is responsible for monitoring and co-ordinating progress under the

deregulation initiative. The initiative has three aims: to abolish unnecessary regulations and licences; to improve the clarity and effectiveness of all rules and regulations where these remain necessary; and to ensure that the compliance costs to business are assessed and taken into account in developing new regulations. The initiative covers regulation by central and local government in the United Kingdom as well as regulations originating in the European Commission. On 13 May, I announced publication of "Cutting Red Tape for Business", the latest record of achievements under the initiative. A copy is in the Library. The benefit of these achievements is cumulative and, taken together, they have saved business many millions of pounds in time and administrative effort.

For example, self-employed people whose annual turnover is below a certain threshold now need only send the Inland Revenue a simple three-line statement of profits instead of full accounts. The threshold has recently been raised to £15,000. Again, the annual turnover threshold for VAT registration has been increased by 38 per cent. from £25,400 to £35,000, keeping small businesses out of the VAT net for longer. The unit would welcome suggestions of new areas for action.

Libya (Trade)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of trade between Britain and Libya in each of the past five years to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

Investor Protection

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the review of investor protection and advice to investors will be published.

Mr. Redwood: The Securities and Investments Board's review of retail regulation is a matter for the board.

Cigarettes

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the market share of imported cigarettes.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the market share of imported cigarettes is published in table D4 on page 67 of the 1990-91 report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Caravans

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has estimated the number of caravans needing to be brought up to current safety standards; what assessment he has made of the availability of sufficient expertise to complete this task by 29 February 1992; if he has estimated the cost of attention and certification likely to fall upon the holiday parks industry; if he is willing to consider financial aid to those unable to meet the cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I welcome the constructive attitude taken by the National Caravan Council and the British Holiday and Home Parks Association on this matter of improving caravan safety following the tragic fatalities earlier this year. All parties involved have demonstrated that the first consideration must be the safety of caravan occupants.

It has been estimated that there are 300,000 caravans distributed over 300 sites. Of these, it is thought that nearly all will need modification to bring them up to the current safety standards for water heater flues. I welcome the speed with which the industry has organised training courses to ensure that there are enough competent people to complete the work by the start of the next holiday season. It is expected that most modifications will be made by the site staff in the closed season, with the average cost for the parts to complete the work expected to be approximately £15 per caravan.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken by the Government to obtain the elimination of the discriminatory tariff and taxation faced by Scotch whisky exported to the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Redwood: Ministers and senior officials, in London and Seoul, raise the problems facing the Scotch whisky industry in the Korean market as a result of discriminatory tariffs and taxation with their opposite numbers in the Republic of Korea at every opportunity.

In addition, we are discussing the possible handling of a GATT case with the European Commission.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken by the Government to ensure that exports of Scottish whisky to Canada continue to be recognised and protected under Canadian legislation.

Mr. Redwood: Both the British Government and the European Commission have represented strongly to the Canadian authorities that the existing protection provided by Canada should not be withdrawn. The Canadian Government are considering these representations now that the formal period for public comment on their proposed amendments to the existing legislation has ended.

Banks

Sir Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans he has to meet the chairmen of individual banks to discuss their status as an independent financial adviser; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with regulators under the Financial Services Act 1986 on ways to encourage banks to provide independent financial advice or advice based on tied association with a provider but not both; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The arrangements governing the provision of investment advice under the Financial Services Act, which are primarily a matter for the Securities and Investments Board, are being considered as part of its review of retail regulation.

ECGD Insurance Services Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he has reopened negotiations with NCM of Amsterdam on the terms for the acquisition of the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department;

(2) what further progress he has to report on the proposed sale of the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department to NCM of Amsterdam; whether there will be further invitations to tender or re-tender for the sale; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his most up-to-date assessment of the date for completion of negotiations with NCM of Amsterdam regarding the sale of the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Lilley: Negotiations with NCM have been continuing since its selection as preferred purchaser, which was announced to the House on 1 July this year. Substantial progress has been made. The negotiations are now nearing completion and the sale is expected to take place on 1 December 1991.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now make it his practice to answer questions on the supply of arms by British companies to Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lilley: It is not the practice to comment on individual export licence applications.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether British companies have supplied cluster bombs to the Yugoslav National Army.

Mr. Lilley: Yes. All export licences for military equipment to Yugoslavia were revoked on 3 July 1991.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his current assessment of the contribution that British firms made in supplying materials that were used by Iraq to detonate nuclear initiators.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 November 1991]:* We have not received full details of information obtained during the inspections in Iraq carried out by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I am, therefore, not yet able to assess whether any British firms supplied materials used by Iraq to detonate nuclear initiators.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will detail the breaches of the arms embargo with Iraq now known to his Department.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* Inspections in Iraq by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have revealed the names of many companies, around the world, which have traded with Iraq, including some from Britain. It is possible that more names will be revealed as time goes on.

The information provided by these agencies is being carefully reviewed, but there is no evidence that the vast majority of the United Kingdom companies that have already been named have done anything wrong. Until the invasion of Kuwait, trade with Iraq was not illegal provided strategic export controls were not breached.

Prosecutions for offences under the Export of Goods (Control) Order are a matter for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on current cases.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library a copy of the document published recently giving guidelines of practice by Her Majesty's Government of information technology goods and services.

Mr. Maples: I have been asked to reply.

I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the "Review of the Information Systems/Information Technology Procurement Processes" undertaken by CCTA—the Government centre for information systems—and involving extensive consultation with industry and Government departmental customers. A management summary entitled "1991 Update" was published recently and I have placed a copy of this in the Library. A comprehensive guide giving detailed advice on best practice is due for publication next week and a copy of that will be placed in the Library as soon as it is available.

SCOTLAND

Govan Dry Docks

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the organisation Clydebuilt about the future of Govan dry docks; and what replies he has sent.

Mr. Allan Stewart: None.

Begging and Sleeping Rough

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were *(a)* prosecuted for begging, *(b)* convicted of begging, *(c)* prosecuted for sleeping rough and *(d)* convicted of sleeping rough in each police district in Scotland in the year ending 31 December 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Neither begging nor sleeping rough is, by itself, a criminal offence in Scotland.

Correspondence

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Lord Advocate will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North dated 22 July 1991 requesting a fatal accident inquiry into the deaths of certain of his constituents in a house fire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lord Advocate's private secretary replied to the hon. Member on 13 August 1991 and 18 October 1991 indicating that inquiries were still proceeding into the circumstances of the deaths of certain of the hon. Member's constituents in the house fire to which he refers.

The procurator fiscal's inquiries are not yet complete. Once they are, the report will be submitted to Crown Office for the consideration of Crown counsel and the decision will then be taken whether a fatal accident inquiry should be held. Once it has been taken, the Lord Advocate will advise the hon. Member of the decision.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the total deficit of hospitals and units with trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: The 57 first-wave trusts are currently not reporting an overall deficit.

Spokes Inquiry

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the recommendations of the Spokes inquiry report, Cm 440, have been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Spokes report made 30 recommendations. Four of these—recommendations 22, 25, 26 and 27—are covered by the care programme approach, HC(90)23/LASSL(90)11, which health authorities in collaboration with local authority social services departments were required to implement as from 1 April 1991.

A clarification of health and local authorities statutory duties to provide after-care for former mentally disordered hospital patients—recommendation 23—is contained in the Mental Health Act 1983 code of practice, laid before Parliament in 1989.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has prepared a document entitled "Good Medical Practice in the Aftercare of Potentially Violent or Vulnerable Patients discharged from Inpatient Psychiatric Treatment" which it plans to circulate to its members in December 1991—recommendation 24.

The new diploma in social work is being introduced. This allows students to specialise in their final year of training. One area of specialist study is mental health. The training of social workers for approval under the Mental Health Act 1983, section 114, now lasts for 60 days and local authorities are also expected to provide their approved social workers with refresher training—recommendation 21.

The Housing Corporation's special needs housing programme provides accommodation for people with special needs, including the mentally ill, at the rate of 3,000 bedspaces per year. In addition, revenue funding for special needs is due to increase from £36·5 million to over £95 million in the period 1990-93. The needs of single mentally ill people will continue to receive high priority—recommendation 28.

The remaining recommendations are regarded as matters of good practice on which no further Government action is required. The recommendations have been drawn to the attention of health and local authorities and the relevant professional bodies which are expected to have taken them into account in developing their own working and training procedures.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on the import, production and sale of counterfeit medicines in the United Kingdom;

(2) what steps he is taking to eradicate the import, production and sale of counterfeit medicines in the United Kingdom;

(3) what assessment he has made of the damage being done to British pharmaceutical companies by the import, manufacture or sale of counterfeit medicines.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 restricts the disclosure of information regarding any alleged importation, sale or production of counterfeit medicines. Any reports of alleged import, production or sale of counterfeit medicines in the United Kingdom are urgently investigated by the enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency. The United Kingdom licensing system covering the import, sale and production of medicinal products is continually kept under review to ensure appropriate safeguards against counterfeit products are maintained. No information is available about any damage being done to pharmaceutical companies arising from alleged trade in such products.

"The Health of the Nation"

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration was given in the preparation of the Green Paper "The Health of the Nation" to the 1985 targets set out by the World Health Organisation in respect of housing and equal access to education.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The World Health Organisation, which has warmly welcomed the approach taken in "The Health of the Nation", has made it clear that its health for all by the year 2000 initiative—HFA—is meant to be adapted to the specific needs of individual countries. All aspects of the WHO approach were taken fully into consideration in preparation of the Green Paper proposals for a health strategy for England. The Green Paper also included a report on England's progress towards meeting the HFA targets.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on how environmental, transport, housing, food and agriculture considerations were integrated in the Green Paper "The Health of the Nation."

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government recognise the importance of a wide range of factors affecting health. This was reflected in the prominence "The Health of the Nation" gave to the responsibilities of specific Government Departments. We have established a ministerial group on which the 14 Government Departments are represented, to oversee development of the health strategy and co-ordinate the Government's contribution to it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how often progress towards health for all is assessed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Progress towards the World Health Organisation health for all by the year 2000 targets is reviewed periodically. The last two reports of progress

were published in the Chief Medical Officer's report "On The State of the Public Health for the year 1989" and in an annex to "The Health of the Nation", June 1991, copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Reforms

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much consultation occurred on the recent national health service reforms before they were instituted.

Mr. Dorrell: The NHS reforms White Paper "Working for Patients", was published in January 1989. The Government have always been prepared to consider constructive proposals for implementation of the policies it set out. The NHS and Community Care Bill was introduced to Parliament on 22 November 1989, where it was subject to the scrutiny of both Houses, and the NHS and Community Care Act received Royal Assent on 29 June 1990. Under the Act NHS hospitals and other units seeking to apply for NHS trust status are obliged to conduct a three-month period of consultation with their local community health council and other bodies as appropriate.

Asthma

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the reasons behind the apparent increase in the prevalence of asthma.

Mr. Dorrell: Unfortunately, and despite the availability of effective preventive therapy, the prevalence of asthma and the occurrence of acute asthma attacks has been rising. This is not a phenomenon confined to this country. New Zealand and the United States of America have seen similar increases. There are a number of possible reasons, including increased levels of pollution, but firm evidence that this is a cause of the increased prevalence of asthma is lacking.

Community Care

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms exist to facilitate co-ordination between Government Departments on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Close contact is maintained through ministerial and official groups.

Back Pain

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many awards the Health Service Superannuation Branch makes each year to staff suffering back pain or back injury for *(a)* National Health Service permanent injury benefit and *(b)* National Health Service temporary injury benefit;

(2) what is the number of claims each year for national health service ill-health retirement pensions because of back pain or back injury;

(3) what is the amount of national health service ill-health retirement pensions paid out each year for retirement due to back pain or back injury;

(4) how many claims the national health service's superannuation branch receives each year for *(a)* national health service permanent injury benefit and *(b)* national health service temporary injury benefit, due to back pain or back injury;

(5) what is the total amount of *(a)* permanent injury benefit or *(b)* temporary injury benefit paid out each year to national health service staff suffering back pain or back injury;

(6) how many ill-health retirement pensions awards the national health service makes each year for retirement due to back pain or back injury;

(7) what is the total number of awards paid for *(a)* national health service permanent injury benefit and *(b)* national health service temporary injury benefit;

(8) what is the total number of claims each year for national health service ill-health retirement pensions;

(9) what is the total amount of national health service ill-health retirement pension paid out each year;

(10) what is the total number of claims each year for *(a)* national health service permanent and *(b)* national health service temporary injury benefit;

(11) what is the total amount paid out each year for all awards of *(a)* national health service permanent injury benefit and *(b)* national health service temporary injury benefit;

(12) what is the total number of ill-health retirement pension awards the national health service makes each year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In England and Wales during 1990-91, the NHS pension scheme received approximately 7,400 applications for ill-health retirement pension of which 7,092 were awarded. In the same year, approximately 1,200 permanent injury benefits were claimed and 1,097 were awarded. Six hundred and thirty of these were one-off lump sum payments, the remainder included a continuing pension. By the end of the year, continuing injury benefit pensions totalled 2,636. Total permanent injury benefit expenditure for the year was £6,493,000, including one-off lump sums and pensions increase. Total temporary injury allowance expenditure was £1,441,000.

Details of temporary injury allowance numbers, separate costs for ill-health retirement pensions and applications, awards or expenditure divided by medical condition are not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

There are parallel schemes for the NHS in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Information for these is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Scotland.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the European Community's HELIOS programme promoting the economic and social integration of disabled people.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have supported all aspects of the European Community's HELIOS programme promoting the economic and social integration of disabled people since it was agreed by the Council of Ministers in 1988. In order to determine what benefits the programme has provided for United Kingdom participants, an independent evaluation of the United Kingdom's part in the programme is being prepared by a team of researchers from Southampton university.

Discussions are currently taking place in the Council's working groups to establish a further five-year programme, HELIOS II, to run from 1992 to 1996.

Hospices

Sir Robert Rhodes James: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total value of extra help provided by the Government for hospices over the last 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have earmarked funds of £17 million this year to enable health authorities in England to increase the support they give to voluntary hospices, bringing the total estimated NHS contribution to £41 million. This is in addition to the cost of specialised palliative care services provided directly by the NHS, estimated at £21 million. These sums do not include social security benefits for hospice residents, which I understand the Department of Social Security does not separately identify.

Nasogastric Feeding Tubes

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of nasogastric feeding tubes being available on prescription from general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am not able to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 11 November at column *409*.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received on the banning of tobacco advertising; how many of these were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 614 representations have been received on this subject; these contain arguments both in favour of and against banning tobacco advertising.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the waiting time for patients needing radiotherapy treatment for cancer at each hospital in the Northern regional health authority area in May 1991; and what is the latest waiting time for those patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no patients waiting for in-patient radiotherapy treatment at any of the hospitals in the Northern region in May 1991 or at present. Out-patients—non-urgent cases—in Newcastle general hospital were waiting for an average of four weeks in May 1991; this has increased to an average of six weeks. New facilities costing £3·2 million now coming on stream will reduce the waiting time to four weeks by early spring 1992.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will increase the level of funding to the Northern regional health authority to provide for the repair of inoperative radiotherapy equipment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Northern regional health authority is currently investing £3·2 million at Newcastle general hospital in the most up-to-date radiotherapy facilities in the United Kingdom including the latest linear accelerator equipment. The regional health authority announced on 9 November that an additional £190,000 has been allocated to the hospital for an additional consultant and radiography staff. It is expected that this will have a speedy effect on waiting times. Non-urgent cases waiting times will reduce to about four weeks by February 1992.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in the Northern regional health authority area who were on the waiting list for radiotherapy treatment have died in the current year before receiving treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will initiate a full inquiry into the treatment of cancer patients in the area of the Northern regional health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. I understand from the chairman of Northern regional health authority that 4,600 patients have been treated by the Northern RHA in 1990-91: an increase of 11·3 per cent. over the previous year. This level of radiotherapy treatment is entirely consistent with levels and patterns of treatment in England as a whole.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken to fulfil the commitment given in his response to the tenth report of the Social Services Committee in Session 1989-90 on the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967 that he would draw to the attention of medical schools the recommendation that candidates for places at such schools should not be asked questions about their attitudes to abortion, and upon what date that action was taken.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials of the Department of Education and Science wrote to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the United Kingdom on 9 May 1991 asking them to draw the attention of medical schools to the Committee's recommendation. The CVCP wrote to the deans of medical schools on 24 May 1991.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the monitoring system for advertisements for hospital posts referred to in his response to the tenth report of the Social Services Committee in Session 1989-90 on the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967; how many breaches of guidelines have been monitored; and what action has been taken in each of those cases.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These monitoring arrangements have identified one breach of the guidelines. The health authority concerned was contacted and withdrew the advertisement.

Patients Charter

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom are likely to fall within the ambit of the patients charter at any one time.

Mr. Dorrell: The rights set out in the patients charter apply to everyone entitled to NHS care in England, and

the national standards defined in the charter apply to all NHS providers in England. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the weight of the current national health service-issue wheelchair for the disabled; when was the last significant change in the design and weight; and what plans he has for introducing and making available through the national health service a new, significantly lighter weight design of wheelchair.

Mr. Dorrell: The target weight for an adult self-propelled wheelchair, including leg rests, foot rests and arms, detailed in the current NHS performance specification is 36lb. The NHS purchases wheelchairs to performance specifications which in 1990 replaced the previous Disablement Services Authority design specifications. Lighter weight wheelchairs from a number of suppliers are also available through the NHS.

Oral Health Strategy Group

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names and current responsibilities of the members of the oral health strategy group convened by the chief dental officer together with the group's terms of reference; and if he will make a statement concerning the discussions which took place at the meeting held on 4 and 6 October.

Mr. Dorrell: The oral health strategy group comprises:

Members

Mr. R. B. Mouatt (Chairman)—Chief Dental Officer, Department of Health.
Miss M. R. Edwards—Assistant Secretary, Department of Health.
Professor J. J. Murray—Department of Child Dental Health, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
Professor C. J. Smith—Department of Oral Pathology, Charles Clifford Dental School, Sheffield.
Mr. N. B. A. Entwistle—Advisory Board in General Dental Practice, Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons of England. Senior Dental Officer, Community Dental Service dental research and information unit, University of Wales.
Mr. W. Allen—General dental practitioner and Regional Adviser in general dental practice.
Mr. R. C. Ward—Consultant in dental public health, East Suffolk Health Authority.
Dr. S. Griffiths—Regional Director of Public Health, SW Thames Regional Health Authority.
Professor M. A. Lennon—Department of Community Dental Health, University of Liverpool.
Professor A. Sheiham—Department of Community Dental Health, University College and Middlesex Hospitals, London.
Mr. G. O. Taylor—Consultant in dental public health and Regional Dental Officer, North Western Regional Health Authority.
Miss J. Todd—Statistician, Dental Practice Board.
Professor N. H. F. Wilson—Department of Conservative Dentistry. Turner Dental School, Manchester.
Mr. R. Thompson—Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales.
Mrs. F. M. Baker (Secretary)—Dental officer, Department of Health.

Observers

Mr. N. K. Colquhoun—Chief Dental Officer, Scotland.
Mr. D. M. Heap—Chief Dental Oficer, Wales.
Mr. W. Collins—Chief Dental Officer Northern Ireland.

The group's terms of reference are:

To revise the 1981 oral health strategy and to advise on the development of an oral health strategy for England, in particular to:

define oral health;

assist in the development of a consultative document which would invite nationwide comment on the development of an oral health strategy;

identify areas of oral health where there is a need for and an opportunity to effect a reduction in avoidable oral disease and where concerted activity could bring major measurable health gain;

set a framework of the best possible information on current status against which progress could be measured;

establish clear targets which could be translated into effective action to meet them and to indicate the manner in which those targets might be achieved."

The first meeting of the group considered the opportunities for health gain afforded by a new oral health strategy and the issues to be addressed in the consultative document. Issues considered ranged over health promotion and education, models of disease prevention, inter-agency activity, consumer participation, care delivery, and primary and secondary care boundaries.

Adult Population

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current adult, over 18 years, population of the United Kingdom extrapolated from the latest available census information.

Mr. Dorrell: The United Kingdom population aged 18 and over at mid-1990, the latest available, is estimated to be 44·28 million. The corresponding projected population at mid-1991 is 44·42 million according to the Government Actuary's latest, 1989-based, projections. These figures take no account of the 1991 census. Estimates of the population at mid-1991 reflecting the 1991 census are expected to be available in September 1992.

Mr. Frank O'Noroe-O'Neil

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will investigate what additional assistance is available to Mr. Frank O'Noroe-O'Neil of 29 Lamberton road, Braintree, Essex, in meeting the cost of his prescriptions, an eye test and spectacles for three distances.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Help under the NHS low income scheme is available for those with limited financial resources who do not otherwise qualify for exemption from NHS charges. No claim has been received from Mr. O'Noroe-O'Neil. Officials will contact him to explain the exemption arrangements and how a claim for help may be made.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council what account the House of Commons Refreshment Department has taken of the recommendations of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy.

Mr. MacGregor: As part of a continuing policy of seeking to provide nutritious and appetising food of a good standard for Members, their staff, and staff of the House, the Refreshment Department retains and follows the advice of a qualified nutritional consultant. That advice takes account of the various studies and conclusions of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, including those contained in the recent report of the panel on dietary reference values.

Crèche

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, columns *59-60*, if he will undertake to inform the Transport and General Workers Union parliamentary branch of the progress of discussions on and plans for the establishment of a nursery on the parliamentary estate.

Mr. MacGregor: It is anticipated that, as appropriate, Members, the staff associations representing their staff, the House of Commons Whitley committee and the Departments of the House will be brought into discussions on any plan to establish a child care facility in the parliamentary estate.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of accidents reported each year by all employers to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is provided in the table.

Occupational injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive[1], under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985[2] 1986-87 to 1989-90[3]

Year	Employees	Number of injuries[4] Self-employed	Members of public[5]	Total
1986-87	161,442	1,734	13,859	177,035
1987-88	157,831	2,068	11,953	171,852
1988-89	158,376	2,701	11,593	172,670
1989-90	161,884	3,221	10,251	175,356

[1] Excludes injuries reported to local authorities and HSC agency inspectorates, namely the petroleum engineering division of the Department of Energy and the railway inspectorate.
[2] Includes a small number of injuries reported to the explosives inspectorates under explosives legislation.
[3] Year beginning 1 April.
[4] Fatal, major and where appropriate, other injuries causing incapacity for work for more than three days.
[5] Members of public injured as a result of someone else's work activity—over three-day injuries are not reportable for members of the public.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of manual handling or back injury-related accidents reported each year by all employers to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Mr. Jackson: The total number of manual handling or back injury-related accidents reported each year by all employers to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 is set out in the table. Column 1 gives the number of manual handling injuries and column 2 the number of back injuries. Column 3 shows the number of back injuries which arise from manual handling injuries.

Injuries to employees reported[1] to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates

Year[2]	Manual handling injuries[3]	Back injuries	Back injuries caused by manual handling	Manual handling injuries reported to other HSE inspectorates[4]
1986-87	45,985	29,610	20,372	[5]
1987-88	46,967	29,958	21,031	2,208
1988-89	47,823	30,312	21,315	1,707
1989-90	49,231	30,693	21,706	1,304

[1] Fatal, major and over three day injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[2] Years commencing 1 April.
[3] Injuries caused by handling, lifting, carrying and awkward movement.
[4] Reports made to HSE's mines, quarries, explosives and nuclear installations inspectorate.
[5] Not available.

On 7 November the Health and Safety Commission published a consultative document containing proposals for regulations and guidance aimed at reducing this toll of injury. The proposals are also a response to the European Commission directive on manual handling the implementation of which is due by 31 December 1992.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of manual handling or back injury-related accidents reported each year by the national health service to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Mr. Jackson: The number of injuries reported each year by the national health service is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The table shows the total number of manual handling related or back injuries to employees occurring in all medical and other health services between 1986-87 and 1989-90.

Date of accident[1]	Number of reported[2] injuries		
	Manual handling related[3]	Back injuries	Back injuries caused by manual handling
1986-87	2,937	2,259	1,861
1987-88	4,113	3,124	2,644
1988-89	4,471	3,456	2,931
1989-90	4,943	3,768	3,202

[1] Years beginning 1 April.
[2] Fatal, major and other injuries causing incapacity for work for more than three days reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985.
[3] Injuries caused by handling, lifting, carrying and awkward movement.

On the 7 November the Health and Safety Commission published a consultative document containing proposals for regulations and guidance aimed at reducing this toll of injury. The proposals are also a response to the European Commission directive on manual handling, the implementation of which is due by 31 December 1992.

Redundancies, Merseyside

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been declared redundant on Merseyside over the past three months.

Mr. Jackson: The provisional number of confirmed redundancies received for the Merseyside area in the three months to September was 2,210.

Co-operatives

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money his Department has set aside for aiding the development of co-operatives in the present financial year; and how much of the money has been allocated or granted to *(a)* the United Kingdom Co-operative Council, *(b)* other organisations concerned with the promotion or development of co-operatives and *(c)* directly to co-operatives in the form of pump-priming grants.

Mr. Jackson: The amount available to support innovative projects in the co-operative sector is up to the amount that might otherwise have been spent in maintaining the Co-operative Development Agency until 1993; that is, up to £300,000 per annum.

In the present financial year £45,000 has been allocated to the United Kingdom Co-operative Council. No further sums have been allocated at present, but the Department is considering proposals from a number of organisations.

Dangerous Cargoes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish the report on the transportation of hazardous cargoes and dangerous substances by road or rail or marine transport.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Commission's report on the major hazard aspects of the transport of dangerous substances was published on 12 November 1991. Sir John Cullen, chairman of the Commission, launched the report at a press conference on the same day.

A copy has been placed in the Library.

Restart Interviews and Job Clubs

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people in Coventry have attended a restart interview since 1 April; what were the results of those interviews; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people in Coventry have attended a restart interview since 1 April 1991; how many of those interviewed then *(a)* started work, *(b)* began training under employment training, *(c)* started in a job club, *(d)* started a restart course or *(e)* attended an enterprise allowance scheme awareness day; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many people in Coventry in the last 12 months since April 1990, and the six months since April 1991 have joined job clubs; how many have left; how many leavers got jobs; how many entered another positive outcome; if he will publish that information broken down by the ethnic origin and by gender; and what are the comparable figures for the west midlands region as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred these questions for reply.

Working Hours

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce statutory rights for people working less than eight hours a week.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for Coventry the figures of unemployment, broken down by age, sex and duration.

Mr. Jackson: Unemployment figures by age and duration are available only on a quarterly basis. The latest, relating to July 1991, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Figures for October 1991 will be published on Tuesday 19 November.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the top 10 constituencies with the highest level of unemployment in England, Scotland and Wales at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: For areas with different sized work forces, such as parliamentary constituencies, the only meaningful comparisons are based on unemployment rates. These are not available at the level of parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons under the age of 21 years are unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the most recent date.

Mr. Jackson: Unemployment figures by age and duration are available on a quarterly basis and provide separate figures for those under 20 years of age. In July 1991, the latest available date, there were 6,804 unemployed claimants aged under 20 in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage rate of unemployment in Liverpool, Riverside constituency at the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The smallest geographical areas for which unemployment rates are available are travel-to-work areas. The unemployment rate in October 1991 for Liverpool travel-to-work area was 14·7 per cent., 6·2 percentage points lower than at the peak in January 1986. The figures are on the unadjusted basis and comparisons are affected by changes in the coverage of the count over the period and by seasonal influences.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table to show, for each of the last 12 months, the number of *(a)* unemployed in Coventry, *(b)* the number of vacancies available at (i) the local jobcentre and (ii) the careers office and *(c)* (a) divided by (b).

Mr. Jackson: The information on unemployment and jobcentre vacancies can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Information for vacancies at career offices in Coventry can be found in the west midlands regional press notice, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on unemployment figures for Liverpool and Merseyside at the latest date.

Mr. Jackson: In October 1991, the unadjusted level of unemployment in the county of Merseyside was 93,485. In the Liverpool travel-to-work area, part of which falls in the county of Merseyside, the unadjusted level of unemployment was 71,150.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of manufacturing jobs in the northern region in 1979 and the number in 1991 or the latest date available.

Mr. Jackson: The information is shown in the table.

Employees in manufacturing in the Northern Region

	Thousands
June 1979	410
June 1991	261

TECs

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has issued any strategic guidance to training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I issued my strategic guidance for 1992-93 to TECs on Friday 15 November. The guidance sets out the key issues I would like TECs to address in their plans for the coming year. At the same time, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I issued a joint statement setting out ways we see the relationship between TECs and his Department being strengthened. I have placed copies of the guidance and the joint statement in the Library.

Libya

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the resumption of direct flights between the United Kingdom and Libya to assist British workers and businesses operating there.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to propose the resumption of direct flights between Britain and Libya. Any such move would be particularly inappropriate in view of the charges that Libyans were responsible for the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is providing to British businesses to try to obtain contracts in connection with *(a)* the great man-made river project and *(b)* the Melita power station in Libya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. We have neither encouraged nor discouraged British companies who wish to trade with Libya. This has been a matter for their commercial judgment alone.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek an assurance from the Libyan authorities that they do not supply arms to terrorists.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our considered response to the charges that Libyan officials were responsible for the Lockerbie bombing will be announced shortly.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Libya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Relations remain very poor, and particularly so in the light of the charges that Libyan officials were responsible for the Lockerbie bombing.

Iraq

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what inspections have so far been carried out by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Agency in Iraq under the terms of Security Council resolution 687; and what contribution Britain is making to their work.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are actively supporting the work of the United Nations special commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency—IAEA—as they carry out their mandates under the relevant Security Council resolutions. They have so far completed 20 inspections. These are listed in the table, together with details of the assistance given by Britain. A further two inspections are currently in progress.

In addition to providing assistance for specific inspections, a senior British expert on chemical and

biological defence matters is a full-time member of the special commission. Other British experts have taken part in ad hoc specialist meetings, one is chairman of the chemical warfare destruction advisory panel who also took part, together with the British member of the commission, in two fact-finding missions to Iraq on chemical weapons. We have made available to the United Nations information on Iraq's weapons capabilities. The Government also suport in principle the nuclear industry's readiness to assist the IAEA, in partnership with French industry, in the IAEA's task of recovering irradiated nuclear fuel from Iraq.

We shall continue strongly to support the work of the special commission and IAEA, and encourage others to do likewise. It is vitally important for the security of the region and the world that Iraq should not be allowed to retain or redevelop its weapons of mass destruction.

Date[1]	*Inspection*[2]	*United Kingdom inspectors*[3]*/Technical experts*	*Equipment/Assistance provided*
14-22 May	UNSCOM 1—first nuclear inspection by the IAEA.	—	Eight landrovers and trailers.
9-15 June	UNSCOM 2—first chemical weapons inspection.	Three	Chemical agent monitors, individual protective equipment, tropical bleach and Fullers' Earth for decontamination, sampling kits and RAF transport. CBDE, Porton Down analysed sample.
30 June to 7 July	UNSCOM 3—first ballistic missile inspection.	One	—
22 June to 3 July[4]	UNSCOM 4—second IAEA nuclear inspection.	One	Use of British landrovers.
6-19 July	UNSCOM 5—third IAEA nuclear inspection.	Two	Analysis of centrifuge components.
27 July to 10 August	UNSCOM 6—fourth IAEA nuclear inspection.	Two	—
2-8 August	UNSCOM 7—first bilogical weapons inspection.	Five, including the leader	Chemical agent monitors, individual protective equipment, sampling kits, Standby Assay Kits, tropical bleach and RAF transport. CBDE Porton Down analysed samples.
8-15 August	UNSCOM 8—third ballistic missile inspection.	One	—
15-22 August	UNSCOM 9—second chemical weapons inspection.	One	CBDE, Porton Down analysed samples.
18-20 July[4]	UNSCOM 10—second ballistic missile inspection.	—	—
30 August to 8 September	UNSCOM 11—third chemical weapons inspection.	One	Chemical agent monitors, individual protective equipment. CBDE Porton Down analysed samples.
30 August to 5 September	UNSCOM 12—fourth chemical weapons inspection.	One	Chemical agent monitors, and individual protective equipment.
6-13 September	UNSCOM 13—fourth ballistic missile inspection.	One	—
14-20 September	UNSCOM 14—fifth IAEA nuclear inspection.	—	—
20 September to 3 October	UNSCOM 15—second biological weapons inspection.	Two, including the deputy leader	Chemical agent monitors, individual protective equipment, sampling kits, kits, Standby Assay Kits, tropical bleach. CBDE Porton Down analysed samples.
21-30 September	UNSCOM—sixth IAEA nuclear inspection.	Two	Assistance with cataloguing and translating documents.
6 October to 9 November	UNSCOM 17—fifth chemical weapons inspection.	Five in Iraq, including the deputy leader and a CBDE Porton Down analytical team, plus a further CBDE Porton Down analytical team in the area.	Chemical agent monitors, sampling kits, individual protective equipment, gas chromatograph—mass spectrometer, infra-red spectrometer, fume cupboards and generator, tropical bleach and Fullers' Earth

Date[1]	*Inspection*[2]	*United Kingdom inspectors*[3]*/Technical experts*	*Equipment/Assistance provided*
1-14 October	UNSCOM 18—fifth ballistic missile inspection.	Two	—
11-22 October	UNSCOM 19—seventh IAEA nuclear inspection.	One	—
22 October to 2 November	UNSCOM 20—sixth chemical weapons inspection.	One	Chemical agent monitors and individual protective equipment.

[1] Dates for entry/exit into/out of Iraq.
[2] UNSCOM denotes "UN Special Commission".
[3] Not including UN or IAEA employed UK nationals.
[4] Brought forward at short notice.

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency in the destruction, removal or rendering harmless of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction under Security Council resolutions 687 and 707.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have made substantial progress in dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction—WMD—capability in the 22 inspections which have been mounted since May 1991, despite deception and obstruction by Iraq in flagrant breach of its obligations under Security Council Resolutions 687 and 707.

SCR 687 required Iraq to make a declaration of the locations, amounts and types of all the items related to its WMD programmes. In making its original declaration, Iraq denied having a nuclear weapons programme or a biological weapons programme, and declared only some 11,000 chemical munitions and only 52 ballistic missiles, with no mention of a supergun. Revised declarations by Iraq and subsequent inspections have revealed: an enormous covert nuclear weapons development programme; a biological research programme for military purposes; some 46,000 filled chemical munitions, 79,000 unfilled chemical munitions, over 600 tons of chemical weapon agent and some 3,000 tons of chemical precursors; 62 ballistic missiles and supergun assemblies and parts. We do not believe that the full extent of the Iraqi WMD programmes has yet been uncovered.

Under the terms of SCR 687, items relating to Iraq's WMD programmes are to be destroyed, removed or rendered harmless. Inspectors have so far supervised the destruction of 62 ballistic missiles; 10 missile launchers, 18 fixed Scud missile launch pads, 11 dummy missiles, 32 ballistic missile warheads, 127 missile storage support vehicles, a substantial amount of rocket fuel, an assembled 350 mm supergun, components for 350 mm and 1,000 mm superguns, 1 tonne of supergun propellant and over 11,800 unfilled chemical munitions. In addition, inspectors have confirmed the destruction, by coalition bombing, of several missile repair and production facilities. Plans are now in hand for the destruction of the chemical munitions and bulk agents. Destruction of the equipment used in Iraq's nuclear weapons development programme has begun and the IAEA is preparing to remove nuclear weapons usable material from Iraq.

At present sanctions apply to all exports to Iraq other than food, medicine and essential civilian supplies for humanitarian purposes. Under paragraph 22 of SCR 687 sanctions will be lifted only when the Security Council agrees that Iraq has completed all the actions concerned with the destruction of its WMD. Even then all states will be required to prevent the sale or supply to Iraq of arms, weapons technology and military training facilities for the foreseeable future, that is, until a further decision of the Security Council.

Moreover, Iraq's ability to use, develop, construct or acquire weapons of mass destruction in future should be precluded by the stringent monitoring and verification regimes embodied in two detailed plans approved under SCR 715 on 11 October. One plan, submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 10 of SCR 687, covers chemical weapons, biological weapons and ballistic missiles. The other, submitted by the director general of the IAEA pursuant to paragraph 12 of SCR 687, covers the nuclear field. The plans entered into force with the adoption of SCR 715 and will remain in force until otherwise determined by the Security Council.

Kenya

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Kenya regarding their relations with Renamo.

Mrs. Chalker: At the beginning of this month, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs sent a message to the Kenyan Foreign Minister expressing the hope that Kenya would continue to use its influence in the region to promote peace in Mozambique. The Secretary of State also thanked President Moi of Kenya for his part in persuading Renamo to cease attacks on the Limpopo corridor.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Yugoslav National Army requesting it not to use cluster bombs in the present fighting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our EC partners have repeatedly called on all sides to respect the ceasefire agreements in their entirety.

Mr. Anson Na Yong

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by the post in Guatemala about the death of British citizen journalist, Mr. Anson Na Yong; what statement has been issued by the post or his Department

on Mr. Yong's death; when letters from the National Union of Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists to him about Mr. Yong's death will be answered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The British embassy in Guatemala is following the Guatemalan investigation into the murder of Mr. Anson Na Yong closely. An initial report was received and forwarded to the United Kingdom coroner. The embassy is pressing for a further progress report.

It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government or British diplomatic posts to issue statements on the death of British nationals overseas.

The International Federation of Journalists, whose letter was acknowledged on 14 August 1991, asked to be kept informed through the National Union of Journalists. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State replied to the National Union of Journalists on 14 October 1991.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Open University

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent he proposes to enhance the broad coverage of the Open university's methods of imparting higher education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The university is playing a prominent part in the development of new course delivery methods and technologies, with the support of the block grant it receives from the Department of Education and Science. I have every confidence that it will continue to do so when it is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

English GCSE

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research was undertaken before the proposal to change the GCSE key stage 4 assessment system in English was introduced.

Mr. Eggar: HM inspectorate has reported that coursework is of a variable quality, may fail to bring out the best in pupils at both ends of the ability range, and may be inadequately moderated. It has, however, reported that it has a generally positive effect on pupil motivation.

Student Support

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what local education authorities have made no provision for discretionary awards to students in 1991-92 and 1990-91;

(2) what local education authorities in the United Kingdom have reduced their budget provision for discretionary awards to students at *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education levels in real terms in 1991-92 relative to provision in 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is not yet available about local education authorities' outturn expenditure on discretionary awards to students in 1990-91, or their budgeted expenditure in 1991-92. The 1991-92 revenue support grant settlement increased standard spending on education by 16 per cent. over 1990-91. It would have allowed authorities collectively to spend 9 per cent. more in 1991-92 than they themselves planned to spend in total on education in 1990-91. This would have permitted some growth in overall discretionary award provision if authorities so chose. I am not aware of any authority ceasing to pay discretionary awards altogether.

Human Tissues

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what co-ordination exists between human tissue banks to prevent human material from going to waste.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Medical Research Council, which receives grant aid from my Department, provides funds for the foetal tissue bank at the Royal Marsden hospital, London and for nine brain tissue banks. The foetal issue bank is a national facility supplying material to more than 100 centres in the United Kingdom. It operates according to guidelines published in the "Review of the Guidance on the Research Use of Foetuses and Foetal Material"—the Polkinghorne report, Cm. 762. The MRC is reviewing the activities of the brain tissue banks to ensure that there is optimum co-ordination between them and their users. The health departments, university departments and medical schools may also be supporting other tissue banks. Information is not held centrally about these.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the advantages and preferred use of human tissues compared with animal tissues in research, testing and education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None. This is a matter for the academic and research community.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the number, location and type of human tissue storage facilities which exist for the purposes of research, testing and education in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Such facilities may exist at higher education institutions, research establishments and hospitals. The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will bring forward proposals to expand the number of human tissue storage facilities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No evidence has been put to my Department which would indicate that such an expansion was needed.

Schools (Ministerial Visits)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools which *(a)* he, *(b)* the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) and *(c)* the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), have visited in their official capacity since assuming their different offices, with the date, purpose of visit, type of school and local authority concerned, in each case.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* I, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) have visited the following schools during our periods in office:

Secretary of State

Monday 26 November 1990
Ribston Hall GM Grammar School (Gloucestershire)—General visit

Wednesday 30 January 1991
Stockingford First and Middle Schools
Alderman Smith High School (Warwickshire)—General visit

Wednesday 1 May 1991
Jewish Free School (Camden)—General visit

Thursday 9 May 1991
Chaucer Technical School
Canterbury High School (Kent)—General visit

Friday 17 May 1991
St. Pauls C of E VA School
Hills Road 6th form College
St. Ivo Secondary School, Huntingdon (Cambridgeshire)—General visit

Friday 7 June 1991
Rushcliffe School (Nottinghamshire)—To speak with Rushcliffe Teachers

Tuesday 11 June 1991
Bourne GM Primary School (Lincolnshire)—Visit to the first GM primary school

Wednesday 12 June 1991
Valley End CE Primary School (Surrey)—To look at SATs for 7 year olds in progress

Wednesday 19 June 1991
Chestnut Grove Secondary School (Wandsworth)—To talk to Parents and Teachers about opting out

Friday 21 June 1991
Harry Carlton Secondary School
Djanogly CTC (Nottinghamshire)—General visit

Monday 24 June 1991
Westminster School (Independent)—Lunch with HMC

Tuesday 16 July 1991
The Arnewood School, New Milton (Hampshire)—Visit to the 100th GM school

Tuesday 10 September 1991
Old Swinford GM School (West Midlands) (Dudley)—General visit

Wednesday 9 October 1991
Fleetwood High School—General visit
Rossall School (Independent) (Lancashire)—Meeting with Independent Heads of Independent schools

Wednesday 16 October 1991
RNIB Rushton Hall School, Rushton—General visit

Friday 18 October 1991
Nottingham High School (Nottinghamshire)—To address School Politics Society

Friday 1 November 1991
Rutland 6th form College
Oakham School (Independent) (Leicestershire)—General visit

Tuesday 5 November 1991
Holgate School, Hucknall—To participate in cross "Thank You" presentation by Armenian school children

Wednesday 13 November 1991
Leigh CTC (Kent)—General visit

Minister of State

Monday 3 September 1990
Velmead County Junior School—General visit
The Wavell Secondary School (Hampshire)—General visit

Wednesday 5 September 1990
Cyril Jackson Primary School (Tower Hamlets)—General visit
Hallfield Infant and Junior School—General visit
North Westminster Community Upper School—General visit
St. Marylebone CE Secondary Girls' School—General visit
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School (GM) (Westminster)—General visit

Friday 7 September 1990
Deptford Green School—General visit
Brindishe Primary School (Lewisham)—General visit

Friday 28 September 1990
Sevenhills Infant and Junior School (Leeds)—General visit
Gateshead CTC (Gateshead)—General visit

Thursday 4 October 1990
Pope John RC Primary School—General visit
Fulham Cross School—General visit
Addison Primary School (Hammersmith and Fulham)—General visit

Wednesday 17 October 1990
Canterbury Cross Junior and Infant School (Birmingham)—General visit

Friday 19 October 1990
Longhill Secondary School—General visit
Woodingdean County Primary School (East Sussex)—General visit

Tuesday 6 November 1990
Queensbridge School (Birmingham)—General visit

Wednesday 7 November 1990
Grandpont Nursery—General visit
Cheney Upper School (Oxfordshire)—General visit

Thursday 15 November 1990
Holme Middle School (Bradford)—General visit

Monday 19 November 1990
Grove Street Primary School—General visit
The Oldershaw School—General visit
Eastern St. Marys CE Controlled School (Wirral)—General visit

Friday 30 November 1990
Central Newcastle High School (Independent) (Newcastle upon Tyne)—General visit
The Kings School (Independent) (North Tyneside)—General visit

Friday 25 January 1991
Christchurch Junior, Middle and Infant School (Hertfordshire)—General visit

Friday 1 March 1991
Greenhead Grammar School (Bradford)—General visit

Monday 4 March 1991
Padgett Street—General visit
Victoria Primary School
(Staffordshire)—General visit

Tuesday 5 March 1991
Kingshurst CTC
(Solihull)—General visit

Monday 15 April 1991
Primrose Hill High School
(Leeds)—General visit

Wednesday 22 May 1991
Roundhay St. Johns Primary School
(Leeds)—Turf digging ceremony

Wednesday 12 June 1991
Broadfields Infants and Junior School—General visit
Holland House
(Barnet)—General visit

Thursday 13 June 1991
Lauriston Primary School—General visit
Haggerston Secondary School
(Hackney)—General visit

Tuesday 18 June 1991
Harehills Middle School
(Leeds)—General visit

Monday 24 June 1991
Grendon Primary School—General visit
Barry Lower School—General visit
Kingsley Park Middle School (GM)
(Northamptonshire)—General visit

Monday 1 July 1991
Fairfield High School—General visit
Kingstone High School—General visit
Michaelchurch Escley Primary School
(Hereford and Worcester)—General visit

Wednesday 3 July 1991
Sir William Collins Secondary School
(Camden)—General visit

Monday 15 July 1991
St. Stephen's CE First School
(Leeds)—Presentation of awards

Monday 22 July 1991
Canon Slade School—General visit
Turton High School
(Bolton)—General visit

Tuesday 23 July 1991
Alma Primary School
(Enfield)—General visit

Tuesday 24 September 1991
Surbiton High School (Independent)
(Kingston upon Thames)—Presentation of Awards

Monday 7 October 1991
Belle View Girls' School
(Bradford)—Visit CALTEC project

Wednesday 6 November 1991
West Leeds Girls High School
(Leeds)—Launch of West Leeds Inner City Project and General visit

Mr. Michael Fallon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

17 September 1990
Alderman Leach Infant and Junior School, Darlington
(Durham)—General visit

25 February 1991
Grangefield Secondary School, Stockton
(Cleveland)—General visit

13 March 1991
Brighton Hill Community School, Basingstoke
Four Lanes Junior School, Basingstoke
(Hampshire)—General visit

15 March 1991
Bramley Sunnyside Infant School
Newman Special School
Brinsworth Comprehensive School
Badsley Moor Junior School
(Rotherham)—General visit

22 March 1991
Sir Thomas More RC VA School, Newcastle
(Newcastle upon Tyne)—General visit
Woodlawn Special School, Whitley Bay
(North Tyneside)—General visit

18 April 1991
Whitefield School, Walthamstow
(Waltham Forest)—General visit

30 April 1991
Eastnor Parochial VC Primary School, Ledbury
John Kyrle County High School, Ross-on-Wye
(Hereford and Worcester)—General visit

20 May 1991
Harrogate Grammar School
(North Yorkshire)—General visit

24 May 1991
Heckmondwike Grammar School, Heckmondwicke
(Kirklees)—General visit

17 June 1991
Beehive Lane County Primary School, Chelmsford
Chelmer valley High School, Chelmsford
(Essex)—General visit

5 July 1991
Huntington Junior School, York
Mill Hill County Primary School, Northallerton
Northallerton Grammar School
(North Yorkshire)—General visit

10 July 1991
Portesham School, Dorchester
Hardye's Comprehensive School, Dorchester
Castlefield Comprehensive School, Dorchester
St. Osmund's Middle School, Dorchester
Manor Park First School, Dorchester
(Dorset)—General visit

12 July 1991
Seaham Comprehensive School, Easington
Peterlee Tertiary College, Peterlee
(Durham)—General visit

15 July 1991
Little Thurrock Primary School, Grays Thurrock
Aveley Comprehensive School, Purfleet
(Essex)—General visit

16 July 1991
Bishop Ramsey CE School, Ruislip
(Hillingdon)—General visit

17 July 1991
Okehampton Primary School
(Devon)—General visit

27 July 1991
Rokeby Boys' Independent Prep School, Kingston
(Kingston upon Thames)—General visit

18 September 1991
Truro Sixth Form Centre
Tresillian County Infant School, Truro
Roseland Community School, Tregony
St. Gluvias County Primary School, Truro
Heamoor County Primary School
(Cornwall)—General visit

19 September 1991
St. Agnes CE vC Primary School
Tresco vC Primary School
Isles of Scilly County Secondary School
Carn Gwaval vC Primary School, St. Mary's
(Isles of Scilly)—General visit

27 September 1991
King Edwin Primary School, Mansfield
Rufford Comprehensive School, Mansfield
Colonel Frank Seely Comprehensive School
(Nottinghamshire)—General visit

4 October 1991
Borrowdale CE Primary School
Ethenside Comprehensive School, Cleator Moor
Fairfield Junior School, Cockermouth
(Cumbria)—General visit

11 November 1991
Broomhaugh CE First School, Riding Mill
Queen Elizabeth County High School, Hexham
(Northumberland)—General visit

Sport (Sponsorship)

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the amount of financial sponsorship of sport by the private sector each year over the last 10 years, showing the percentage change.

Mr. Atkins: The Government welcome the contribution of private sector sponsorship towards the funding of sport in the United Kingdom. The mutual benefits to sport and business are clear from the increase in such funding over the past 10 years. The available figures are:

Year	*Sponsorship (£ millions)*	*Per cent. increase*
1980	30	—
1981	60	100
1982	85	42
1983	100	18
1984	110	10
1985	125	14
1986	145	16
1987	160	10
1988	180	19
1989	210	17

Sports Council

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the annual grant aid provided for the Sports Council since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's annual grant aid to the Sports Council of Great Britain since 1979 has been:

Year	*£ millions*
1979-80	15·580
1980-81	19·288
1981-82	21·032
1982-83	28·002
1983-84	27·123
1984-85	28·603
1985-86	30·112
1986-87	37·349
1987-88	37·139
1988-89	38·412
1989-90	41·877
1990-91	[1]43·747
1991-92	46·653

[1] Plus an extra £1 million.

British Boxing Board of Control

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with the British Boxing Board of Control.

Mr. Atkins: I had a constructive meeting with the BBBC on 16 October. My purpose in calling the meeting was to encourage discussion between medical specialists and the BBBC on safety in professional boxing. I understand that, as a result, the BBBC is intending to instigate regulations to include most of the recommendations proposed at that meeting.

Manchester Olympic Bid

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the chairman of the Manchester Olympic Bid Committee; and what was discussed.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment and I met the chairman of the bid committee together with representatives from the British Olympic Association and Manchester city council on 5 November to discuss progress with the bid.

School Swimming Facilities

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the survey of school swimming facilities to be completed.

Mr. Atkins: Schools and local education authorities have been asked to complete and return survey questionnaires to the Department by 22 November 1991. The survey is intended to provide a picture of the access schools have to swimming pools; the number of pools on school sites; the recurrent costs associated with swimming provision; and the cost of building learner pools where necessary. This information will help determine when a requirement can be introduced for all primary age pupils to be taught to swim.

Sport (Drug Abuse)

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to curb drug abuse in national and international sport.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have sought to counter doping through the establishment in 1988 of the Sports Council's independent drug testing programme, and through the announcement in February 1991 of a carefully targeted package of measures to tackle steroid misuse including the creation of a new criminal offence of

supplying steroids to minors. Internationally, the Government have ratified the Council of Europe's anti-doping convention which came into force in 1990 and have signed a trilateral anti-doping agreement with the Australian and Canadian Governments.

Sports Clubs (Rate Relief)

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding rate relief for sports clubs and its effects on extra-curricular school sport.

Mr. Atkins: I have had many representations on the subject of rate relief for sports clubs, several of which concern its effects on sport beyond the curriculum. The Government are particularly keen to encourage more links between schools and local sports clubs in order to provide opportunities for sport outside school hours. We recognise the value of the facilities that many non-profit making sports clubs provide for the local community. That is why we have retained the arrangement from the previous rating system whereby non-profit making sports clubs can receive up to 100 per cent. rate relief at the discretion of their local authority. The Government will refund to local authorities 75 per cent. of any relief awarded. The preliminary results of a Department of the Environment survey show that more non-profit making sports clubs received more relief in 1990-91 than in 1989-90, the last year of general rates.

Sport Expenditure

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the Government's annual expenditure on sport in 1979 and in the last year available.

Mr. Atkins: Central Government's annual grant to the four Sports Councils of the United Kingdom in 1979-80 was £21·490 million and the estimated outturn for 1991-92 is £60·49 million.

Local government gross revenue expenditure in England and Wales on sport and recreation in 1979-80 was £333 million and in 1989-90 it was £1,028 million.

Champion Coaching Project

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the champion coaching project.

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted that earlier this year I was able to announce an additional £700,000 for the Sports Council to fund champion coaching. This pilot scheme is being run by the National Coaching Foundation and is providing sporting opportunities beyond the school curriculum for more than 6,000 children in 24 areas across England and in 11 sports. Six hundred local coaches will also be trained to work with young people. Champion coaching will provide examples of successful local partnerships which I hope will encourage the creation of further sporting opportunities for young people at local level.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table listing *(a)* the amounts of capital allocations for county and voluntary controlled schools for 1992-93 for which each local education authority in England has bid, *(b)* the amount of capital grant for voluntary aided schools in their area which each local education authority has asked of his Department and *(c)* the totals of *(a)* and *(b)* for each local education authority and with totals in respect of *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* for England, and for each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is provided in the table. The figures are taken from the capital plans for 1992-93 submitted by each local education authority to the Department. It must be borne in mind that, in most cases, the bidding process produces figures which far exceed any sum which the authorities concerned seriously expect to receive or need to spend in the year in question.

Capital Expenditure Bids 1992-93

Bids for annual capital guidelines (ACGS) for county and controlled schools and bids for capital allocations for voluntary aided and special agreement schools

(£000s)	*County and controlled schools*	*VA and SA Schools*
LEA		
Barking	6,032	467
Barnet	8,022	1,201
Bexley	11,413	1,918
Brent	15,884	71
Bromley	6,702	71
Croydon	15,120	1,000
Ealing	27,633	798
Enfield	13,460	1,927
Haringey	5,256	214
Harrow	16,865	95
Havering	6,434	50
Hillingdon	8,937	100
Hounslow	16,540	847
Kingston	1,946	99
Merton	8,808	174
Newham	13,017	390
Redbridge	6,271	66
Richmond	3,968	*388
Sutton	8,205	1,821
Waltham Forest	19,505	0
Total outer London	220,018	11,697
City of London	0	0
Camden	3,292	1,160
Westminster	18,767	3,146
Greenwich	5,334	340
Hackney	8,041	193
Hammersmith	5,329	1,712
Islington	9,718	2,256
Kensington	5,976	1,677
Lambeth	6,773	1,141
Lewisham	13,287	815
Southwark	3,244	826
Tower Hamlets	14,484	1,520
Wandsworth	31,477	120
Total inner London	145,722	14,906
Birmingham	29,760	4,550
Coventry	8,816	2,849
Dudley	7,058	1,377
Sandwell	6,056	409
Solihull	1,766	910
Walsall	3,769	20
Wolverhampton	14,281	760
Total West Midlands	71,506	10,875
Knowsley	5,718	235
Liverpool	14,995	4,972
St. Helens	4,406	1,040

(£000s)	County and controlled[2] schools	VA and SA Schools
Sefton	4,665	1,879
Wirral	6,854	230
Total Merseyside	36,638	8,356
Bolton	3,349	6,307
Bury	2,807	330
Manchester	29,020	1,538
Oldham	8,235	1,138
Rochdale	12,757	474
Salford	9,228	707
Stockport	2,643	34
Tameside	3,697	336
Trafford	3,223	1,656
Wigan	8,266	1,567
Total Greater Manchester	83,225	14,117
Barnsley	7,233	100
Doncaster	1,071	10
Rotherham	5,770	64
Sheffield	19,986	1,124
Total South Yorkshire	33,460	1,298
Bradford	27,433	1,219
Calderdale	3,220	46
Kirklees	5,795	798
Leeds	39,449	5,570
Wakefield	10,295	206
Total West Yorkshire	86,192	7,839
Gateshead	8,599	757
Newcastle	24,804	1,171
North Tyneside	7,954	454
South Tyneside	6,738	84
Sunderland	8,637	1,384
Total Tyne and Wear	56,732	3,850
Avon	8,904	568
Bedfordshire	7,860	865
Berkshire	21,703	350
Buckinghamshire	12,412	957
Cambridgeshire	27,817	1,809
Cheshire	26,912	3,012
Cleveland	6,357	392
Cornwall	18,476	344
Cumbria	19,402	1,989
Derbyshire	41,748	657
Devon	19,165	2,578
Dorset	20,581	2,900
Durham	27,604	1,562
East Sussex	51,921	586
Essex	58,584	163
Gloucester	16,294	2,277
Hampshire	21,795	534
Hereford and Worcester	11,168	1,156
Hertfordshire	23,519	509
Humberside	22,411	947
Isle of Wight	6,425	0
Isles of Scilly	96	0
Kent	39,215	3,403
Lancashire	31,020	5,279
Leicestershire	25,923	890
Lincolnshire	26,435	794
Norfolk	9,347	628
North Yorkshire	10,160	733
Northampton	8,087	489
Northumberland	7,343	857
Nottingham	20,549	1,353
Oxfordshire	20,179	2,315
Shropshire	10,403	12
Somerset	9,071	2,866
Staffordshire	18,048	2,364
Suffolk	18,343	569
Surrey	19,319	*3,077
Warwickshire	10,802	1,058
West Sussex	11,093	759
Wiltshire	12,175	708
Total Shire Counties	778,666	52,309
TOTAL ENGLAND	1,492,158	125,247

Notes:

[1] The figures should be treated with caution. They represent the initial bids made by local education authorities and take no account of subsequent amendments to those bids.

[2] All figures are in thousands.

[3] The bids for capital allocations at voluntary aided (VA) and special agreement (SA) schools do not include bids for Minor Improvement Projects. Grants for minor works will be allocated to LEAs by formula.

[4] VA and SA schools bids marked "*" include an estimate for committed projects (ie based on 1991-92 submissions) since LEA bids for such expenditure have not yet been received.

School Grants

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish an updated version of the table given in answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn, 22 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *184-86*, to include estimates for expenditure for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The updated information requested is provided in the table.

Total allocations and annual capital guidelines for England in cash and constant terms

Schools	Local Authority schools and colleges			Voluntary aided and special agreement schools			Local Authority schools and colleges and voluntary aided and special agreement		
	Cash	Constant index 81-82 prices	81-82 prices	Cash	Constant index 81-82 prices	81-82 prices	Cash	Constant index 81-82 prices	81-82 prices
1981-82	355	355	100	24	24	100	379	379	100
1982-83	338	316	89	22	21	87	360	336	89
1983-84	295	263	74	19	17	71	314	280	74
1984-85	300	255	72	25	21	87	325	276	73
1985-86	315	254	71	31	25	104	346	279	74
1986-87	297	231	65	28	22	92	325	253	67
1987-88	306	227	64	32	23	97	338	250	66
1988-89	387	267	75	43	30	123	430	296	78
1989-90	352	228	64	56	36	150	408	264	70
1990-91	485	290	82	74	44	184	559	334	88
1991-92	538	300	85	84	47	195	622	347	92
1992-93	590	315	89	96	51	214	686	366	97

Notes:

[1] All figures are in £ million. All figures are rounded.

[2] Constant prices are calculated at 1981-82 prices using the latest DGP deflators. The index for 1981-82 is set at 100.

[3] The cash allocation figure for voluntary aided and special agreement schools for 1992-93 is provisional.

[4] The Department provides grant aid at a rate of 85 per cent. on governors' capital expenditure at voluntary aided and special agreement schools.

[5] Capital grant figures for the voluntary aided sector for 1981-82 are not separately identifiable from a single building grant figure which includes repairs and maintenance. The capital figures shown for this year are based on an apportionment of the building grant figure using the average ratio between capital and repairs during 1982-83 and 1985-86.

[6] Prior to 1981-82 local authorities did not receive block allocations, but were notified annually in the context of a rolling programme of a limit on the value of the building starts in the following year.

[7] Local authority allocations for 1989-90 and subsequent ACGs exclude institutions which were transferred to the PCFC sector in 1989-90.

Parents Charter

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many parents there are in *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom with children up to the age of 18 years in full-time education who will be assisted by the parents charter.

Mr. Eggar: Up-to-date information on the number of families with children in full-time schooling is not readily available. The latest available pupil numbers show that in 1990-91 there were 7 million pupils up to age 18 studying full-time in schools in England. The latest available equivalent figure for the United Kingdom, for 1989-90, is 8·4 million.

National Curriculum

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to lay before Parliament the statutory order to introduce modern foreign languages into the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today published the document setting out the attainment targets and programmes of study for modern foreign languages in the national curriculum, and have laid an order which will bring this document into effect from the beginning of the next school year for pupils starting key stage 3—those aged 11 in September 1992.

The introduction of the requirements for modern foreign languages in the national curriculum will ensure that pupils follow challenging courses of study, leading to high standards and worthwhile levels of achievement by pupils of all abilities.

My right hon. Friend and I have also today laid a new order under section 3(2)(b) of the Education Reform Act which specifies in a single list instead of two schedules the languages eligible to be the national curriculum foundation subject.

Copies of all these statutory documents have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to lay before Parliament the statutory order to introduce the geography short course for key stage 4 in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following publication in March of the national curriculum geography order, I have published today a document setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for the geography short course at key stage 4 and have laid an order which will bring this document into force from August 1994.

The publication of this document will ensure that pupils who at age 14 are not taking a course in geography leading to GCSE, are offered the choice and flexibility to continue to study geography. I expect that the short course will facilitate the development of useful combined GCSE or vocational courses: for example, geography with history, economics or a modern foreign language. My aim is to create the conditions which will enable pupils to maximise their potential.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is making a separate order to introduce geography short course arrangements in Wales.

Teacher Training

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were recruited to courses of initial teacher training in 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A survey undertaken by my Department shows that 28,792 students entered courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales in October 1991. This is a dramatic increase of 4,998 or 21 per cent. over 1990. Intakes to primary courses were 13·5 per cent. higher and intakes to secondary courses were 32·4 per cent. higher than last year. There were increases of 35 per cent. or more in intakes to courses in the secondary shortage subjects of mathematics—42 per cent.—science—38 per cent.—technology—57 per cent.—and modern languages —35 per cent.

Overall recruitment into teacher training this year is at its highest level for any year since 1976. It is especially encouraging to see particularly good increases in shortage subjects. It shows that teaching is once again an attractive career option for young people and that we should not face any serious problems of teacher shortage over the next four years.

I am placing in the Library the detailed results of the survey.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eastern Europe

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning aid for overseas development in eastern Europe this winter.

Mrs. Chalker: We have a continuing programme of technical assistance to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union under the know-how-fund. We discuss this regularly with recipient Governments. I am not aware of our having received any recent requests for further development assistance which relate specifically to the forthcoming winter.

OECD

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Development Ministers of OECD countries on aid matters over the last month.

Mrs. Chalker: I met the director general of the Japanese Economic Co-operation Bureau on 30 October. We had wide-ranging discussions on aid issues.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what overseas aid projects now taking place in Sri Lanka are helped with funding from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chalker: I announced to the House on 22 July the withdrawal of our conditional offer of £3 million assistance for Sri Lanka and said that any new major commitments would be considered in the light of Sri Lankan Government policies and practices including the position on human rights. No such projects have been agreed since then. A list of ongoing projects agreed before July has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

British Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing Government support for British Waterways at 1991 prices for each year since 1979, and planned support for the next three financial years.

Mr. Heseltine: The table shows in current prices the Government's grant to the British Waterway Board—BWB—in the years 1979-80 to 1991-92, together with BWB's external financing limit, EFL, which covers grant and borrowing from the National Loans Fund, for the same period.

	Grant		*External financing limit*	
	Cash £ million	*1991-92 prices* £ million	*Cash* £ million	*1991-92 prices* £ million
1979-80	22·8	52·7	25·7	59·5
1980-81	25·6	50·0	30·0	58·7
1981-82	28·4	50·6	31·6	56·3
1982-83	37·6	62·6	39·3	65·4
1983-84	39·8	63·3	40·8	64·9
1984-85	41·8	63·3	42·8	64·8
1985-86	43·5	62·5	44·1	63·3
1986-87	43·9	60·9	44·8	62·2
1987-88	44·0	58·0	45·0	59·3
1988-89	45·9	56·3	44·9	55·1
1989-90	48·1	55·5	48·5	53·6
1990-91	49·3	52·8	49·4	52·9
1991-92	48·5	48·5	48·5	48·5

The BWB's external financing limit for 1992-93 has been set at £51·1 million, with guideline figures of £49·3 million and £46·4 million for the following two years.

The figures for grants fluctuate from those in the BWB accounts, since the accounts figures are amounts receivable in respect of the year, while the above figures are the amounts actually paid in each year.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce a regulatory agency for British Waterways.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what implications the policies contained in Cm. 1559, the citizens charter, have for waterways users or customers of the British Waterways Board.

Mr. Heseltine: I expect the board to take full account of the principles of the citizens charter in the customer charter it is developing. In particular, I expect to see that it has effective means for dealing with complaints from users and customers.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the British Waterways Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Heseltine: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), met the chairman of the board on 11 November to discuss a number of matters of current interest, including financing; the board's proposed customer charter; and the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the British Waterways Bill.

Mr. Heseltine: Since this private Bill was deposited on 27 November last year, a number of letters have been received from hon. Members, and the public, concerning various clauses. The replies have made it clear that it is for the promoters, British Waterways Board, to satisfy Parliament of the case for the Bill.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation affecting the regulation of navigation rights on inland waterways.

Mr. Heseltine: No; but as recommended by the Environment Select Committee, we are starting a review of the navigation functions of British Waterways Board and the National Rivers Authority. It is too early to say whether legislation will result from this review.

Access to Information

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue the consultation paper on implementing the EC directive on freedom of access to information on the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Many aspects of the directive have already been implemented, for example through the registers on pollution emissions set up under the Environmental Protection Act. I hope to issue a consultation paper on full implementation in the new year.

Wildlife Research

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has carried out or commissioned within the last two years on *(a)* the epidemiology of diseases of wild animals and *(b)* marine mammal strandings, including small cetacean species.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has commissioned the following studies, some of which cover both issues to some extent.

(1) Directorate of Rural Affairs. *Wildlife Disease Investigation Review* by the Natural Environment Research Council. Final Report published in February 1991 and obtainable from NERC.

(2) Water Directorate. *Effects Monitoring using marine mammals* by NERC Sea Mammal Research Unit. Final report awaited.

(3) Water Directorate *Seal Epidemic and Pollutant levels* by NERC/SMRU. Summary of main findings presented to the British Association for the Advance of Science 91 Conference held in Plymouth in August 1991. Published by the Association.

(4) Water Directorate *Thymulin in Seals* by United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals. Final report available from DOE.

(5) Water Directorate. *Variation in the prevalence of fish disease in Scottish Coastal Waters* by Scottish Office, Agriculture and Fisheries Department Laboratory. Final report expected in 1992.

(6) Water Directorate. *Wildlife disease—Co-ordination and sampling of marine mammal strandings* by the Institute of Zoology, London. Final report expected in 1993.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit Leicester.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no plans to visit Leicester in the immediate future.

Montreal Protocol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to ratify the Montreal protocol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom ratified the Montreal protocol in 1988. Next month we intend to ratify the amendments to the protocol that were agreed at the second meeting of the parties held in London last year, if possible in concert with our Community partners.

River Quality

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available for improving river water quality and regenerating waterside land.

Mr. Baldry: Grants specifically aimed at improving river water quality are not available from my Department. The responsibility for monitoring and regulating river water quality lies with the National Rivers Authority. There are a number of initiatives, such as derelict land grant, which may provide assistance in the regeneration of waterside land.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the figure of £900 million of public expenditure in energy efficiency improvements in the public sector housing stock set out in his first annual report of the ministerial group on energy efficiency was arrived at; and to which financial year it relates.

Mr. Yeo: This figure is based on the proportion of annual expenditure on the public sector housing stock, directed at the improvement of heating and insulation, identified in the 1986 English house condition survey. The estimate of £900 million relates to the financial year 1990-91.

Local Authority Pension Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 5 November *Official Report*, column *16*, if the equalisation of survivor benefits will extend to past contributions.

Mr. Heseltine: The intention is to provide equal benefits for widows and widowers in respect of service from 6 April 1988. In addition, women will be able to bring earlier service into account if they wish, either by means of reductions in their future lump sums, or by paying additional contributions. Children's pensions will be payable from 6 April 1988 in respect of the whole of their deceased parents' service.

Council House Sales

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the total figure held by each district authority in the south-west in capital receipts from the sale of council houses for *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* the total held at the end of the first financial quarter for the current year.

Mr. Yeo: The total of usable capital receipts held by each authority at 31 March 1991 is given in the table. Capital receipts held from the sale of council houses are not separately identifiable. Data on the stock of receipts are collected on an annual basis only.

Usable receipts held at 31 March 1991[1]

	£000
Bath	2,691
Bristol	2,696
Kingswood	1,011
Northavon	3,164
Wansdyke	3,881
Woodspring	3,369
Caradon	1,032
Carrick	1,402
Kerrier	174
North Cornwall	2,207
Penwith	1,440
Restormel	954
Isles of Scilly	292
East Devon	4,324
Exeter	5,428
Mid Devon	9
North Devon	3,951
Plymouth	16,259
South Hams	3,485
Teignbridge	1,239
Torbay	4,164
Torridge	1,510
West Devon	1,989
Bournemouth	2,887
Christchurch	6,160
East Dorset	1,873
North Dorset	8,739
Poole	977
Purbeck	2,295
West Dorset	1,753
Weymouth and Portland	6,936
Cheltenham	2,257
Cotswold	0
Forest of Dean	1,198
Gloucester	920
Stroud	2,752
Tewkesbury	411
Mendip	1,230
Sedgemoor	1,425
South Somerset	2,547
Taunton Deane	1,724
West Somerset	1,898

	'000
Kennet	22
North Wiltshire	2,268
Salisbury	5,344
Thamesdown	10,491
West Wiltshire	5,835

[1] Latest available information.

Cable Laying, Yorkshire

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what application was submitted to the appropriate local authority for planning permission to lay a new cable between Menwith Hill station and Hunter's Stones post office tower in north Yorkshire; who submitted the application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* No application has been received by the local planning authority or my Department in respect of cables between Menwith Hill station and Hunter's Stones post office tower in North Yorkshire.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information his Department has on the number of people without permanent accommodation or in temporary accommodation for each local authority area in the first three quarters of 1991;

(2) what information he has on the number of people in private sector housing provided by each local authority in the first three quarters of 1991;

(3) what information his Department has on the number of people in temporary bed-and-breakfast accommodation for each local authority area in the first three quarters of 1991.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* The available information relates to households dealt with by local authorities under the homelessness provisions in part III of the Housing Act 1985, which is reported quarterly to the Department.

I have today placed in the Library a table for the second quarter of 1991—the latest available—showing *(a)* the number of households who applied to local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act, *(b)* the number for whom local authorities accepted responsibility to secure permanent accommodation *(c)* the number in temporary accommodation at the end of June and of those, *(d)* the number in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and *(e)* the number in private properties leased by local authorities and *(f)* the number which having been accepted remain in their current accommodation until permanent accommodation becomes available.

Additionally the number of persons sleeping rough on census night was published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its "Supplementary Monitor on People sleeping rough", a copy of which is in the Library.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to bring into force section 61 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* Section 61 of the Environmental Protection Act is closely linked with and will be implemented together with the waste management licensing provisions of the Act. Under the target timetable for the implementation of part II of the Act, announced on 25 June 1991 by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, these provisions are due to come into effect in April 1993.

The consultation paper "Improving environmental quality—the Government's proposals for a new, independent Environment Agency" issued on 3 October 1991, stated that the timing of these provisions will need to be reviewed in the light of the emerging timetable for the agency.

Docklands Light Railway

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the experience of each member of the London Docklands development corporation in running public transport.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The present chairman of the London Docklands development corporation previously served as deputy chairman of London Regional Transport and was the first chairman of the DLR; Sir John Garlick was formerly permanent secretary of the combined Departments of Transport and Environment; and Sir Robert Reid, formerly chairman of British Rail, is an LDDC nominee to the board of DLR Ltd.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he plans to give the same statutory powers to the London regional passengers committee regarding consumer representation on docklands light railway once it has passed to London Docklands development corporation as currently exist under London Transport's management of docklands light railway;

(2) what powers the London Docklands development corporation has to call upon the British transport police; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he plans to ensure that travelcard and through ticketing arrangements will continue to operate on the docklands light railway once it has been transferred to the London Docklands development corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* These are all matters to be resolved as part of the process of transfer of responsibility for the docklands light railway from London Regional Transport to the London Docklands development corporation.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the future management of the docklands light railway once the London Docklands development corporation has been wound up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* No date for LDDC's wind-up has been set. But when the issue does arise, in keeping with the Government's overall policies, I would expect the docklands light railway to be operated by the private sector.

Local Government Finance, Gloucestershire

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps using his powers under the local government legislation to prepare a report on the finances of Gloucestershire county council.

Mr. Key: No. My right hon. Friend has no such powers.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in England for which management agreements are currently being negotiated, giving details of the damage threatened in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is confidential to English Nature and the owner-occupier of the SSSI.

Tenants' Charter

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants in *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom currently have statutory rights under the tenants charter.

Sir George Young: At 1April 1990, in England, there were 4,370,000 tenants of local authorities and 563,000 tenants of housing associations, making a total of 4,933,000. The Department does not hold figures on the total number of secure tenants who meet the conditions of part IV of the Housing Act 1985 and have statutory rights under the tenants charter. For information about Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, I refer my right hon. Friend to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Scotland and for Wales.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance Contributions

19. **Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people at the upper earnings limit pay national insurance contributions on overtime payments.

Mr. Jack: At least 3 million people benefit from the existence of the upper earnings limit and this includes those who normally earn below the upper earnings limit but whose earnings in any one week including overtime exceed the weekly limit. The upper earnings limit ensures such people pay national insurance contributions on only part of their earnings from overtime.

Pensioners

20. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail the movement in pensioners' real earnings *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and to the latest date and compare each with the underlying movement in average earnings for the same period.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be interested to hear that the average real value of the earnings of those single pensioners in work, or pensioner couples where one or both were working, increased by 36 per cent. between 1979 and 1988. This compared with a decrease of 6 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. The average real earnings of the whole economy rose by 1 per cent. between 1974 and 1979 and by 25 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average income of a single pensioner and a pensioner couple on income support; and what is the total weekly value of their income from all benefits.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) earlier today.

21. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give an estimate of the trend in pensioners' real incomes since 1979.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that the average total net income of single pensioners and pensioner couples increased by 34 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the increase in income support rates for a pensioner couple aged over 80 years as a result of this year's uprating.

Miss Widdecombe: A pensioner couple aged over 80 years will see an increase in their income support of £7·70 at the April 1992 uprating. This is an increase of 8·7 per cent. We have increased the higher pensioner premium by £1·50 for couples and £1 for single people, in addition to the 7 per cent. increase in income support personal allowances and premiums. This premium is payable to disabled pensioners aged 60 to 79 as well as those aged over 80.

Elderly People (Services)

22. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are being taken to improve DSS service to the elderly.

Miss Widdecombe: We are continually improving our services to the elderly. The recent introduction of the local office computer network has already resulted in a speedier service for pension claims and inquiries. For example, retirement pension claims which were taking, on average, 20 days to clear in 1990-91 are now taking only 16 days.

National Insurance

23. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the weekly cost to someone on *(a)* £25,000 a year and *(b)* £30,000 of the removal of the national insurance upper earnings limit.

Mr. Jack: If the national insurance upper earnings limit were to be removed, someone on earnings of £25,000 or £30,000 a year would pay extra contributions of approximately £8·17 or £16·82 respectively each week.

Care Homes

24. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are expected to benefit from the increased funding from residential care and nursing home income support limits announced in October 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) earlier today.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total full-year cost of increases in income support limits for people in residential care and nursing homes announced in the last two years.

Miss Widdecombe: The estimated full-year cost of the April 1991 increase in residential care and nursing home limits is £225 million and for the April 1992 increase £190 million.

Disabled People

148. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on help available to people with disabilities in the form of grants from the European Community.

Mr. Scott: The EC does not make grants to individual disabled people. However, disabled people do benefit from the EC's programmes which I listed in my reply to the hon. Member on 12 November at column *475*.

150. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will receive a deputation of Sheffield people with disabilities to discuss the distribution of European Community grants.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Member will write to me with details I will certainly consider the request.

151. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has received any recent representations about the funding by the European Community for helping people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: We have received no such representations recently.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money from the European Commission budget has been spent on projects for disabled people in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Scott: We are seeking the information requested direct from the Commission. I will write to the right hon. Member.

Sir Patrick Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the moneys available from the European Community for helping people with disabilities in member states.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) on 12 November at column *475*.

Community Charge

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount income support for a single person will be reduced, pursuant upon the introduction of the council tax, based on today's rate of payments made to compensate for 20 per cent. community charge payments, assuming no increase in the cost of living.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether it is his intention on enactment of the Local Government Finance Bill to take into account in the re-rating of social security benefits the abolition of the obligation to pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 3.8 of the Government's consultation document "A New Tax For Local Government", which is in the Library.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the proportion of his Department's spend to be transferred to local authorities when his policy of community care is implemented.

Miss Widdecombe: We shall transfer to local authorities, via the Department of Health, the expenditure which would otherwise have been incurred by this Department on the care element of income support for people who enter residential care and nursing homes after 31 March 1993.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), on 12 November, *Official Report*, column *477*, what is the estimated cost for 1991-92 of the adjustments made to income-related benefit levels in April 1989 in respect of the 20 per cent. poll tax contribution, excluding the first 50p of the adjustments for single persons and the first £1 for couples.

Miss Widdecombe: The full cost of the adjustment made to income-related benefit levels is estimated to be £580 million at 1991-92 benefit levels. Reducing the personal allowances for all the income-related benefits by 50p for single people and £1 for couples would save an estimated £210 million.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1986-7-8 Family Expenditure Surveys at 1991-92 prices and benefit levels.

War Pensions

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions to simplify the war pensions scheme; and when changes are expected to be implemented.

Miss Widdecombe: Copies of the scrutiny report which made proposals, inter alia, for the simplification of the war pensions scheme have been given to members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions and various other ex-service organisations for them to comment. The report was discussed at the June meeting of the committee and will be discussed again at its next meeting on 5 December. Comments are still being received and in general they are supportive. Any changes agreed as a result of these discussions will be implemented as soon as possible. One small change, the absorption of dependency allowance into the basic war disablement pension, has already been announced to be implemented from next April following the unanimously favourable response to this improvement.

Benefit Claims

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for each quarter since October 1989, how many income support and unemployment benefit claimants in Coventry have *(a)* successfully and *(b)* unsuccessfully claimed income support under the hardship rules, showing those whose claim was in doubt due to (i) not actively seeking work, (ii) refusing suitable employment and (iii) availability for work.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon.

Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants applied for grants or loans under the social fund during the 1990-91 financial year in Coventry; how many were turned down and for what reason; what was the average size of the grant, crisis loan or budgetary loan in the year; and if he will provide comparable figures for the first three and six months of 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make inquiries to ascertain the number of districts currently paying social fund loans where there is considered to be serious risk to health and safety.

Mr. Scott: All Benefits Agency districts are currently paying social fund loans to applicants where there is considered to be a serious risk to health and safety.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what social fund directions concerning the provision of assistance to people entering, or returning to, the United Kingdom from abroad have been issued in the last 18 months; and what they are, to whom they apply, the period for which they are in force and where they are published.

Mr. Scott: On 7 September 1990 special, temporary, arrangements were introduced to provide help from the social fund for people returning to or entering the United Kingdom, where the entry or return was as a result of war or hostilities in the country which they left, or a neighbouring country. These arrangements were made as a result of the Gulf crisis.

Details of the special arrangements were published in the main social security leaflet "Which Benefit" (FB2) and also in various other leaflets. The availability of this help was also mentioned in the annual report on the social fund 1990-91, Cm 1580, presented to Parliament by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 17 July 1991.

I have today sent the hon. Member a copy of the Secretary of State's directions, which give effect to the special arrangements, and a copy will be placed in the Library. The directions apply to any person who fulfils the conditions laid down in them. The directions will be withdrawn on 27 November, since the purpose for which they were put into place no longer exists. The directions are as follows:

"Settlement or resettlement loan
Direction 3A. A Social Fund payment may be awarded to assist an eligible person to meet, for a temporary period following his entry or return to the United Kingdom from another country, reasonable settlement or resettlement expenses where his entry or return is a result of war or hostilities in that or a neighbouring country.

Travel grant
Direction 4A. A Social Fund payment may be awarded to assist an eligible person with reasonable travel, accommodation or subsistence expenses arising from his or a member of his family's entry or return to the United Kingdom from another country where the entry or return is as a result of war or hostilities in that or a neighbouring country to the extent that those expenses have been or are likely to be necessarily incurred whilst in transit between the port of entry and his likely place of stay in the United Kingdom.
Direction 6A. An award within direction 4A is referred to in these directions as a travel grant and shall not include a determination that it is repayable.

Settlement or resettlement loans and travel grants
(a) Eligibility
Direction 29A. A person is eligible for a settlement or resettlement loan under direction 3A or a travel grant under direction 4A if he is aged 16 or over and the conditions of that direction are satisfied and the applicant has no available or insufficient resources to meet the expenses to which that direction relates at the date when the application is determined.

(b) Effect of capital on settlement or resettlement loans
Direction 29B. Where the total capital resources available to the applicant and his partner exceed £500 (£1,000 if the applicant or partner is aged 60 or over) any settlement or resettlement loan which would but for this direction be awarded, shall be awarded only to the extent that the amount exceeds the amount by which the available capital resources exceed £500 (£1,000 if the applicant or partner is aged 60 or over).

(c) Maximum amounts
Direction 29C. The maximum amounts which may be awarded—
(a) under direction 3A is £2,500 but, if an amount has already been awarded under that direction to the applicant or his partner, the maximum amount must not exceed the difference between any sum already repayable to the Social Fund by the applicant or his partner in respect of any award under that direction and £2,500;
(b) under direction 4A in respect of the applicant and each member of his family is £500."

Local Offices (Coventry)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current targets for his Department's offices in Coventry for meeting *(a)* delivery and *(b)* accuracy for benefits administered.

Miss Widdecombe: The setting of targets for district offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* permanent and *(b)* temporary staff were employed in each category in his Coventry offices on 1 January 1991, 1 May 1991 and at the latest convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The staffing of district offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to improve the services his Department offers for people in Coventry; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Customer service in local offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Pension Schemes

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the regulations following his review of the disclosure requirements for occupational and personal pension schemes, including unit-linked personal pension plans, to which he referred in his answer of 20 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *318*, will be laid.

Miss Widdecombe: Draft regulations on disclosure requirements for occupational and personal pensions schemes, including unit-linked personal pension plans, were referred to the Occupational Pensions Board. The board has now reported to the Secretary of State and regulations will be laid shortly.

Mrs. Edith Hirons-Wing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that Edith Mary Hirons-Wing of 9 Molesworth road, Cobham, Surrey receives her pension book this week.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that a retirement pension order book was sent to Mrs. Hiron-Wing on 1 November 1991.

Mrs. Mary Trotter

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mrs. Mary Bryant Trotter, reference FY/123/63A, submitted a claim for night allowance; and if he will ensure that a decision on her claim is sent to her within the next week.

Mr. Scott: Mrs. Trotter applied for higher rate attendance allowance on 13 March 1991. The result of her application together with payment in full was sent to her on 15 November 1991.

Local Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set up an inquiry into the extent of closing of benefit claim offices during official opening hours.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so. Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *90*, what information is available concerning the closure of benefit claim offices during official opening hours; and what procedures or regulations govern closure during official opening hours and what discretion is left to the local managers.

Miss Widdecombe: The closure of benefit claim offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *83*, on transitional protection, if he will break down the number of income support transitional claimants by pensioners, long-term sick and disabled, families with children and others.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is as follows:

	Number
Pensioners	10,000
Long-term sick and disabled people	5,000
Families with children	5,000
Others	10,000
Total	25,000

Note: Figures may not sum to total due to rounding.
Source: Based on modelling using data drawn from the May 1990 Annual Statistical Enquiry of Income Support recipients.

Family Credit

25. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much rates of family credit will change in April 1992.

26. **Sir William Shelton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much rates of family credit will change in April 1992.

Mr. Jack: In April 1992 all the rates which are used in the calculation of family credit will be increased by 7 per cent. Families receiving family credit will also gain from the increase in child benefit.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Coventry are currently receiving family credit; and what were the figures six and 12 months ago.

Mr. Jack: Operational issues of family credit are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Child Benefit

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the total value to a two-child family of the three increases in child benefit which will have taken place in the year to April 1992.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the total value to a two-child family of the three increases in child benefit which will have taken place in the year to April 1992.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) earlier today.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the full-year cost of the last two increases in child benefit and next April's proposed increase.

Mr. Jack: The full-year cost in 1992-93 will be over £1 billion. This represents an increase of 22 per cent. compared with the expenditure for 1990-91.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces (Housing)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of his Department's plans to ensure there is sufficient housing provision for members of the armed forces prior to their discharge into civilian life.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Serving members of the armed forces are provided with accommodation, if they require it, as part of their conditions of service.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many residential properties his Department currently owns in the Woolwich area; how many of these are empty; how many have been disposed of during the past five years to *(a)* public housing bodies or *(b)* private purchasers; and how many are currently being leased to public housing bodies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the Ministry of Defence owned 628 such properties in the Woolwich area, of which 87 were empty.

Over the past five years 100 properties have been disposed of, 90 to public housing bodies and 10 to private purchasers. Currently there are no properties on lease.

MV Polar Circle

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the MV Polar Circle will *(a)* embark Royal Navy helicopters, *(b)* be armed and *(c)* embark Royal Marines during its forthcoming voyage to the South Atlantic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For HMS Polar Circle's forthcoming deployment in the Antarctic, she will embark two Royal Navy Lynx helicopters and a small detachment of Royal Marines. The ship will not be armed.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his practice to answer questions on plans for future nuclear tests.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Libya (Minefield Records)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available to Libya relevant second world war minefield records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Libyan authorities were provided with maps and information about British minefields in Libya in 1981.

Northern Ireland (Duty Tours)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average interval between short tours of duty in Northern Ireland for *(a)* infantry battalions and *(b)* armoured regiments over the last decade.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been our aim that intervals between all emergency tours—deployments to Belize, Cyprus and the Falkland Islands as well as Northern Ireland—are 24 months long, but this has not always been achieved. Only one armoured regiment has served in the short tour role in Northern Ireland in the past 10 years; the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment in 1990. The reduction in tension in Europe means that units based in BAOR can now be used on a more frequent basis; this should ensure that the 24-month tour interval target is usually achieved.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans have been made to deploy British units of the rapid reaction corps to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Units assigned to the ACE rapid reaction corps, ARRC, will be available to undertake short, unaccompanied operational tours in Northern Ireland and elsewhere—as is at present the case with units assigned to NATO. So far as United Kingdom-based units are concerned, this represents no change from the present situation. But, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear during the defence debate, in future, while still maintaining appropriate levels of readiness for NATO tasks, it will be possible for units based in Germany to take a greater share of these tours than when we faced the threat of surprise Soviet attack.

Anti-Ballistic Missiles

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from his Soviet and American counterparts regarding their bilateral discussions on anti-ballistic missile systems.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States has kept us and other allies informed of progress on this issue. The details of discussions between Governments are confidential.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what declassified assessments have been made available by his Department on the changes that have occurred in the development plans of Soviet anti-ballistic missile defences in the last decade.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 13 November, *Official Report*, columns *613-14*.

Friendly Fire

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what actions have been taken to prevent friendly fire incidents as a result of investigations into the incident on 26 February 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I outlined in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) on 24 July, *Official Report*, column *706*, the board of inquiry into the incident in the Gulf on 26 February recommended that a study should be initiated to identify a suitable air recognition system for future use. The board also recommended that target co-ordinates should be specifically included in mission briefs and acknowledged by pilots. Studies in pursuit of these recommendations are under way.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further action has been taken to investigate the death

of nine British soldiers on 26 February 1991 in the Gulf as a result of friendly fire, since the publication of the board of inquiry's report.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 15 November, *Official Report*, column *704*.

Northern Ireland (Duty Tours)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what length of time is required for *(a)* infantry battalions and *(b)* armoured regiments to train for short tours of duty in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The same length of time is allocated for pre-tour training for both infantry battalions and non-infantry units, but during that time the latter receive additional tuition on those infantry skills with which they are not familiar.

Regiments

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *338*, to the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), if he will set out the timetable for the merging of the Ulster Defence Regiment with the Royal Irish Rangers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The planning date for the merger of the UDR and the Royal Irish Rangers continues to be July 1992. The formation of a single general service battalion from the 1st and 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish Rangers will follow as soon as practicalities permit, but should be complete in 1993.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many deaths have occurred in the British military advisory team to Zimbabwe over the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There has been one. A sergeant was killed in September 1990 as a result of a road traffic accident.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 November 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Attorney-General how many staff, both police or civilian, are employed by the Serious Fraud Office; and how many there have been in each year since its creation.

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office currently employs 116 permanent civil servants. The figures for previous years are as follows:

Sixty-two in 1988-89, 83 in 1989-90 and 101 in 1990-91. The permanent civil servants employed are supplemented by temporary staff whose number varies with operational requirements. The number of temporary staff so employed is currently 57. The Serious Fraud Office does not employ police officers. Police officers work in conjunction with the Serious Fraud Office and are attached to cases under the control of the Serious Fraud Office by agreement with the appropriate police force.

TRANSPORT

Locomotives

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he gave financial approval for expenditure on the electric locomotives used on the Stoke on Trent–Euston service; and how many *(a)* class 90 electrics and *(b)* class 86-2 electrics (i) were approved and (ii) are currently in use;

(2) how many 1987-88 InterCity new 110 mph class 90 electric locomotives were *(a)* approved and *(b)* delivered to InterCity for use on the west coast main line out of Euston, and of those how many are used on *(a)* the InterCity sector *(b)* Railfreight and *(c)* parcels;

(3) how many class 90 locomotives built between 1988 and 1990 were allocated from InterCity to Railfreight; and what impact this reallocation has had on InterCity's capacity to meet its quality of service objectives.

Mr. Freeman: Approval for 50 class 90 locomotives was given in 1984. Fifteen were allocated by BR for use on InterCity services on the west coast main line, of which the Stoke-Euston route is a part. All are currently in use on that line.

The remaining 35 class 90 locomotives were allocated to what are now the freight and parcels sectors.

Approval for class 86/2 locomotives was given in the mid-1960s. Information on their original deployment is no longer available. Twenty-two class 86/2 locomotives remain in service on the west coast main line.

Freight Operations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he plans to commission a study on the implications of continental-gauge freight operations into the United Kingdom and the effect upon existing freight operations to and from the existing regions;

(2) when he last discussed with the chairman of British Rail the implications of building a continental-gauge freight route to London.

Mr. Freeman: BR is confident that it has sufficient capacity on its existing lines to cope with forecast increases in international freight and its limited programme of structure gauge enhancements on specific route sections will enable some 95 per cent. of swap bodies and containers used on the continent to travel to the BR network of regional channel tunnel freight terminals. Operating continental gauge freight wagons in the United Kingdom would require either the construction of new lines or very costly modifications to existing lines and rolling stock. It is envisaged that the new channel tunnel rail link to London would be built to continental gauge. My Department is considering with British Rail the revenue and cost implications of designing this link to accommodate freight as well as passenger trains, compared with alternative ways of providing additional capacity for freight movements.

King's Cross

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision is included in his Department's expenditure plans for 1991 to 1994 published in February 1991 and adjusted in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement for the construction of the proposed new terminal at King's Cross.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to decide its investment programme and priorities within the resources available.

High-speed Rail Link

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has received from British Rail about the amounts of revenue income from high-speed rail link services along the Ove Arup route that will be attributable, respectively, to the financing of the proposed new terminal at King's Cross and that of the planned station at Stratford East.

Mr. Freeman: For each of the routes studied, the forecast revenues associated with proposed stations were treated as an integral part of the route and not individually identified.

Goods Vehicle Instructors

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce minimum standards for large goods vehicle instructors; and how this will be implemented and monitored.

Mr. Chope: I have no plans at present to do so.

Road Safety Schemes

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the average typical first-year costs and rates of return for local road safety schemes.

Mr. Chope: A report published by the Transport and Road Research laboratory in 1989 showed that the average local safety scheme cost about £7,000 and saved just over one casualty accident per year, valued at £16,690, where both figures are in 1987 prices.

Splash and Spray Suppression

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the British standard for splash and spray suppression to be upgraded to the higher European directive standard.

Mr. Chope: I hope that a revised standard will be available by the middle of next year.

Lorry Overloads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of lorries stopped and checked for possible overloading expressed as a percentage of total lorry journeys.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that in 1990 about 0·06 per cent. of all HGV journeys were checked for excessive weight.

This statistic relates to vehicles weighed by Department of Transport and local authority trading standards enforcement staff. The police also weigh vehicles, but no information on the numbers they weigh is available.

Highways (Damage)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the damage and wear inflicted on highways by private cars.

Mr. Chope: The damage and wear inflicted on highways by private cars is very small in relation to that caused by lorries.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the annual cost over the past five years of the damage caused to *(a)* highways and *(b)* under-road services by lorries.

Mr. Chope: The road track costs of vehicles in the United Kingdom, and the amounts allocated to large goods vehicles are given in the Department's annual publication "The allocation of road track costs", copies of which are available from the House Library. Technical investigation has failed to establish any direct causal link between heavy lorry traffic and damage to underground services.

Speed Limits

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will give details of any time limits which have been set within his Department within which statutory procedures for the introduction or alteration of speed limits on principal roads must be completed; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No statutory time limits are set for my Department to deal with speed limits on principal roads. They are dealt with as quickly as possible. I intend to set target times within which this work should be done in future.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current number of formal applications submitted by local highway authorities to his east midlands regional office seeking to introduce new or revised speed limits on principal roads; how long ago the earliest submission which remains undetermined was made to his Department; and how many full-time staff are deployed on this work.

Mr. Chope: There are currently seven applications still undetermined. The earliest was submitted on 8 February 1991. No staff work exclusively on speed limit orders. Resources are deployed as and when necessary and target times within which this work should be completed are to be set to avoid such long delays.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement, with specific dates, on the involvement of his Department in approving the 40 mph speed limit on the A6003 road through Preston, Rutland; and what action he intends to take to prevent any repetition in Leicestershire or Rutland of the incident by which the signs were erected but remained covered and inoperative between January and October 1991.

Mr. Chope: The formal application from Leicestershire county council was received on 21 March 1991 and after due consideration consent was notified to the county council on 20 September 1991. The erection of the necessary signs is a matter entirely for Leicestershire county council as the local highway authority. I am unable to comment on why the council chose to erect the signs in advance of the order being sent to my Department. The signs were uncovered shortly after consent was granted.

Tube Trains (Capacity)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultations he has had with London Underground over the standing capacity limits in tube carriages;

(2) what representations he has received over the capacity limits of London Underground trains.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received only one representation in the last three years about the capacity limits of London underground trains, although I understand the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has received a few letters.

The inspectorate has discussed with London Underground on the Secretary of State's behalf plans for refurbishing existing trains and proposals for new stock. It has been an objective of these discussions to maximise passenger-carrying capacity while maintaining safety.

Filton Airfield

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with councillors from Avon county council over proposals to develop Filton airfield into a commercial airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: Filton is one of the 10 locations being considered by a working group, chaired by my Department, in terms of their ability to help meet air traffic demand after the turn of the century. The local authority input to the group's work, including that from Avon county council in respect of Filton and Bristol Lulsgate, is being coordinated by Serplan.

Yachts

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the estimated cost to an average yacht owner of installing the necessary safety equipment and crew required by the proposed Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Yacht) Regulations; and when he plans to bring these regulations into force.

Mr. McLoughlin: There will be no cost to the average yacht owner. The proposed regulations will apply only to commercially operated yachts. It is intended that the regulations come into force on 1 April 1992.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which yachts will be subject to the proposed Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Yacht) Regulations; and how many such yachts he estimates there are in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: Only commercially operated yachts will be subject to the proposed regulations. Yachts used solely for the sport or pleasure of the owner are excluded from the regulations. Information on the numbers and use of yachts is not held by the Department.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on similar regulations to the proposed Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Yacht) Regulations in force in each of the other EC countries; and if he will report when such legislation was enacted.

Mr. McLoughlin: Scandinavian standards, which detail extensive requirements, for commercially operated pleasure craft are being implemented in 1992 by Denmark. The Netherlands are incorporating similar regulations next year and Belgium in 1993. No information on the requirements of other EC countries is available at present.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many surveyors from his Department will be employed, and at what cost to the Exchequer, to enforce the proposed Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Yacht) Regulations; and what he will charge yacht owners to have their vessels surveyed.

Mr. McLoughlin: Application of the regulations will require no additional surveyors or cost to the Exchequer. Any survey required on commercially operated yachts will be charged for surveys in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Fees) Regulations 1991, SI 1991/784.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* angling boats, *(b)* charter yachts, *(c)* cruising yachts, *(d)* diving boats and *(e)* sailing schools, respectively, will be affected by the proposed Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Yacht) Regulations.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the various types of craft, used commercially, is not held by the Department. Sailing schools can operate under the terms of the code of practice for sail training ships. Compliance with the code, which was developed with the industry, gives exemption from the requirements of legislation. If agreement can be reached with those concerned it is proposed to introduce further codes of practice to cover other categories of pleasure craft used commercially.

Train Accidents

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost of the single track train accidents at Bellgrove, Hyde and Newton, including loss, damage, repair, replacement of rolling stock, other assets and equipment, related staff, resource and disruption costs, legal fees and all forms of compensatory payments made to passengers, British Rail's staff and relatives.

Mr. Freeman: Details of these costs are matters for British Rail.

Trains (Servicing)

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in securing the introduction and servicing of the class 159 DMU trains due to operate on the Waterloo-Andover-Exeter service from October 1992, to which he referred to his answer of 19 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns 35-6.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that BR expect the new class 159 DMU trains to be delivered during the summer of 1992 and to enter service from September 1992. I can confirm that British Rail are now able to go ahead with the construction of the new depot at Salisbury to service and maintain these trains, within the finance available to them within the autumn statement. The Government's decision to provide a substantial increase in funding for investment in the railways has enabled BR to allocate money to this project.

ENERGY

Wave Energy

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the report of the wave energy review being carried out by his Department will be published.

Mr. Moynihan: The interim report on the wave energy review is published today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of the House. The report explains the methodology being used in the review. All interested parties are being consulted in this work as it progresses. The final report containing the results of the review will be published early next year.

Joint European Torus Laboratory.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the amount of energy recently produced by the joint European torus laboratory at Culham.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the experiment on 9 November, the JET device is reported to have produced an energy release equivalent to 1 MW for two seconds. Many times this amount of energy was required to operate the device.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost to date of the JET programme at Culham.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The cost of the JET programme to the European Community and associated partners Sweden and Switzerland has been about £750 million to the end of 1990.

SOCIAL SECURITY

State Benefits

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families were dependent on state benefits in 1964; and how many families are dependent on state benefits in the current year.

Miss Widdecombe: Provisional figures show that 353,000 families were receiving family credit in August 1991. In 1990, the latest yar for which figures are available, there were 1.15 million families receiving income support. Figures are not available for 1961.

Sources: Family credit statistical sample and annual statistical inquiry 1990.

PRIME MINISTER

Executive Agencies (Disabled Workers)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *356*, if he will list the six Departments and agencies which exceeded a 3 per cent. level of staff registered as disabled in 1990.

The Prime Minister: In 1990 more than 3 per cent. of employees were registered disabled in each of the following departments and agencies: Crown Estate Office; Department of Employment Group; Land Registry; National Investment and Loans Office; Paymaster General's Office; Registers of Scotland.

Departmental Annual Report

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will arrange for the common core memorandum on departmental annual reports issued by Her Majesty's Treasury in July to be further revised to include in section D research and development undertaken by or sponsored by the Department;

(2) if he will make it the practice for all departmental annual reports to include as part of their common core information a statement of research and development activity sponsored by or undertaken by the Department.

The Prime Minister: All departments with significant levels of spending on research and development already include relevant material in their departmental annual reports. Past and planned spending by departments on research and development was set out in table 4.13 of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement", Cm. 1520. Up-to-date information will be published early next year in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement". Extensive additional information is published by the Cabinet Office in the annual review of Government-funded research and development. The requirements for the 1993 departmental reports will be reviewed in the light of comments on the 1992 reports from Select Committees and others.

Health Promotion

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to co-ordinate the activities of the Departments of Health and of Education and Science on including health promotion and self health care into the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is already the policy of both Departments to work together closely in order to secure that young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote their immediate and long-term good health. To that end, aspects of health education are already included, wherever relevant, in several national curriculum foundation subjects.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 19 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENVIRONMENT

Right-to-buy Legislation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to enable local authorities to introduce identical service charges for people's properties purchased under the right-to-buy legislation, where the properties are similar and receive the same services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: There are no plans to amend the legislation, which provides that a tenant exercising the right to buy a flat may be required to bear a reasonable part of the costs of repair and other services provided by the landlord.

The protections of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 apply to purchases of local authority flats under right to buy as well as to purchases in the private sector. Leaseholders have the right to information on how their service charges have been made up and may challenge unreasonable demands in court.

UN Environment Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters were discussed and decisions taken at the third preparatory committee meeting for the United Nations conference on environment and development in August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The preparatory committee for the United Nations conference on environment and development—UNCED—held its third session at the United Nations Office in Geneva from 12 August to 4 September 1991.

The preparatory committee considered reports on the activities of the conference secretariat and of other intergovernmental bodies. In its plenary sessions, the preparatory committee considered the structure and

organisation of the UNCED action programme and cross-sectoral issues such as finance and technology. The preparatory comittee also considered the arrangements for UNCED, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro from 1 to 12 June 1992.

Working group I of the preparatory committee considered proposals relating to the atmosphere, land resources, biological diversity and biotechnology. It also began work on a statement of principles on the management, conservation and development of all types of forests. Working group II considered proposals relating to the oceans and seas, freshwater resources, wastes and chemicals, while Working group III discussed legal and institutional matters, including proposals for a declaration of principles on general rights and obligations in the field of environment and development.

Many of the decisions the preparatory committee adopted requested the UNCED secretariat to prepare revised proposals for the preparatory committee at its fourth session, which will take place in New York from 9 March to 3 April 1992.

The United Kingdom presented reports by consultants on the role of technology transfer in the conservation of biological diversity and in tackling global climate change, and a discussion paper on the linkage between population, environmental degradation and development. These documents will be laid before the House.

River Quality

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the National Rivers Authority report on river quality.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the National Rivers Authority expects to publish its report of the 1990 river quality survey in December.

Local Government Finance Bill

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken of the ideas submitted to him by the Liberal Democrats in the preparation of the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Key: We welcomed the Liberal Democrats' decision to take up our offer of discussions on the future of local government finance. We do not, however, believe that a local income tax is the way forward.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will quantify the net value of transfers —gross transfers minus reverse transfers from housing revenue accounts to general funds—from local authority general funds to their housing revenue accounts for each calendar year between 1980 to 1990 both on an England and Great Britain basis.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested for English local housing authorities for the financial years 1980-81 to 1989-90 is shown in the table.

Year	*Net Value of Transfers to Housing Revenue Accounts £*
1980-81	308,697,811
1981-82	327,383,247
1982-83	251,723,321
1983-84	291,333,242
1984-85	287,590,281
1985-86	257,615,638
1986-87	276,691,862
1987-88	279,016,885
1988-89	308,841,920
1989-90	82,580,313

The figures are taken from housing subsidy claim forms and are not audited.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* England made transfers from their housing revenue accounts to their general funds during 1990-91 and 1991-92; what is the estimated total value of such transfers; and if he will provide similar information on a projected basis for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Yeo: Schedule IV to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires a local housing authority to make a transfer from its housing revenue account to some other revenue account if its housing revenue account subsidy calculation results in a negative amount. The transfer must be equal to that amount. An authority not entitled to housing revenue account subsidy may also transfer any end-of-year surplus on its housing revenue account to some other revenue account. In 1990-91, a total of 19 English authorities transferred an estimated total of £23,227,569 from their housing revenue accounts. In 1991-92, a total of 14 authorities are expected to transfer an estimated total of £21,741,658 from their housing revenue accounts.

The level of transfers from housing revenue accounts in 1992-93 and 1993-94 will depend largely on annual decisions about rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances for those years and the amount of rent rebate expenditure incurred.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities in England failed to attract a positive housing borrowing capital account during 1990-91 and 1991-92 and the total aggregate value of the annual housing capital guideline allocations to such authorities;

(2) how many local authorities would continue not to attract a positive borrowing capital account if total gross capital housing allocations to local authorities in England were raised to *(a)* £5 billion, *(b)* £7 billion and *(c)* £10 billion, assuming that the pattern of distribution of that allocation prevailing during 1991-92 between authorities remained unchanged and both their RTIAs and the capital grants provided to them for housing purposes did not change; and what would be the aggregate value of their annual housing capital guideline allocations.

Mr. Yeo: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the information given in his answer of 28 March 1991, *Official Report*, column *533*, on how much the estimated cost of housing revenue account

rent rebate subsidy for years 1990-91 and 1991-92, and its planned provision for years 1991-93 and 1993-94 would be were it not for the assumed transfer of rental income from the tenants of some councils.

Mr. Yeo: The total contributions to rent rebates which local authorities made from their housing revenue accounts in 1990-91 is estimated to be £195 million. It is estimated that authorities will make contributions of £302 million in 1991-92 and £530 million in 1992-93. The estimate for 1992-93 is subject to the outcome of the current consultation exercise on proposals for rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances for that year. No decision has been made for 1993-94.

Local Authority Notices

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a complete list of all those local authorities that have been issued with *(a)* section 13 notices, *(b)* section 14 notices, both under the Local Government Act 1988, *(c)* section 19a notices and *(d)* section 19b notices, both under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, giving dates of issue in each case, and indicating for each case the reason for issuing the notice.

Mr. Portillo: Following is the information:.

Notices issued under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988 where

(a) the authority appeared to have acted in an anti-competitive manner

Birmingham City C—10 May 1990
Braintree DC—29 March 1990
Bristol City C—4 September 1989
Bury MBC—1 June 1990
Camden LB—3 July 1990
Charnwood BC—21 December 1989
Doncaster MBC—21 September 1990
East Lindsey DC—9 April 1990
Eden DC—29 March 1990
Halton BC—9 October 1991
Haringey LB—12 November 1991
Hillingdon LB—4 September 1989
Knowsley MBC—7 December 1989
Leicester City C—11 September 1990
Liverpool City C—31 May 1990
Redditch BC—18 January 1991
Thurrock DC—3 October 1990
Wakefield MBC—6 March 1991
Warrington DC—2 August 1991
Waveney DC—24 July 1991
Wolverhampton MBC—3 January 1990
Woodspring DC—6 September 1990
York City C—10 May 1990

(b) the authority appeared to have failed to achieve the prescribed financial objective

Breckland DC—19 September 1991
Camden LB—3 July 1990
Crawley BC—29 July 1991
Crawley BC (2 notices)—9 October 1991
Eastleigh BC—18 December 1990
Epsom and Ewell BC—1 July 1991
Gloucester City C—28 October 1991
Gosport BC—29 July 1991
Harrogate BC—1 July 1991
Haringey LB—12 December 1990
Humberside CC—8 June 1990
Lewes DC—28 October 1991
North Tyneside MBC—1 July 1991
Redbridge LB—1 July 1991
Shropshire CC—28 October 1991
Surrey CC—28 October 1991
Waverley DC—28 October 1991
West Devon DC—1 July 1991

and

(c) the authority appeared to have failed to comply with the detailed specification for the work

Camden LB—3 July 1990

Directions served under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 where

(a) the authority appeared to have acted in an anti-competitive manner

Doncaster MBC—11 December 1990 (replacement direction issued 28 March 1991)
Hillingdon LB—13 March 1990 (replacement direction issued 1 August 1990)
East Lindsey DC—6 July 1990 (replacement direction issued 31 July 1990)
Knowsley MBC—6 July 1990 (replacement direction issued 3 August 1990)
Leicester City C—19 December 1990 (replacement direction issued 29 January 1991)
Liverpool City C—6 August 1990 (replacement direction issued 24 June 1991)
Redditch BC—5 March 1991
Thurrock DC—19 December 1990 (replacement direction issued 5 March 1991)
Wakefield MBC—15 August 1991
Woodspring DC—8 November 1990
York City C—9 August 1990 (replacement direction issued 13 September 1990).

(b) the authority appeared to have failed to achieve the prescribed financial objective

Camden LB—31 October 1990
Eastleigh BC—9 April 1991
Haringey LB—20 June 1991
Harrogate BC—15 November 1991
Humberside CC—30 July 1990
and

(c) the authority appeared to have failed to comply with the detailed specification for the work

Camden LB—31 October 1990.

Notices issued under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 where

(a) the authority appeared to have acted in an anti-competitive manner

Wirral MBC—28 March 1989
Liverpool City—30 May 1991
Salford City C—1 July
and

(b) where the authority appeared to have failed to achieve the prescribed financial objective

Barrow in Furness DC—1 July 1991
Brent LB—20 December 1989
Bromley LB—29 July 1991
Camden LB—1 July 1991
Copeland BC—9 July 1991
Eastleigh BC (2 notices)—18 December 1990
Greenwich LB—10 April 1991
Harrogate BC (2 notices)—1 July 1991
Kingston Upon Thames LB—29 July 1991
Milton Keynes BC—15 October 1991
Portsmouth City C—29 July 1991
Rochdale MBC—7 February 1991
Salford MBC—1 July 1991
Shepway DC—1 July 1991
Stroud DC—10 April 1991
Tonbridge & Malling BC—10 October 1990
Tower Hamlets LB—1 July 1991
Waltham Forest LB—29 July 1991
Warrington DC—29 July 1991
Worthing BC—29 July 1991
Wychavon DC—29 July 1991
Wycombe DC—12 December 1990

Directions served under section 19B of the Local Government Planning Act 1980 where
(a) the authority appeared to have acted in an anti-competitive manner
Wirral MBC—23 October 1989
and

(b) where the authority appeared to have failed to achieve the prescribed financial objective
Brent LB—24 July 1990
Barrow-in-Furness DC—15 November 1991
Greenwich LB—25 September 1991
Harrogate BC (2 notices)—15 November 1991
Shepway DC—15 November 1991
Tonbridge & Malling BC—28 February 1991

Directions served under section 19B of the Local Government Planning Act 1980 where
(a) the authority appeared to have acted in an anti-competitive manner
Wirral MBC—23 October 1989
and

(b) where the authority appeared to have failed to achieve the prescribed financial objective
Brent LB—24 July 1990
Barrow-in-Furness DC—15 November 1991
Greenwich LB—25 September 1991
Harrogate BC (2 notices)—15 November 1991
Shepway DC—15 November 1991
Tonbridge & Malling BC—28 February 1991

Air Pollution

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the EC directive of 28 June 1984 on the combating of air pollution from industrial plants (84/360/EEC) has been transposed into United Kingdom law.

Mr. Baldry: Implementation of the air framework directive in Great Britain has been by means of the Alkali &c. Works Regulation Act 1906, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and regulations made thereunder. This will be reinforced by the new controls introduced under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Implementation in Northern Ireland is also by means of the Alkali Act. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland intends to make regulations to bring into effect the residual requirements of the directive relating to public access next spring.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review government classification of ozone levels so that they are in line with World Health Organisation guidelines and report exceeding of eight hour guidance values.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 11 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *394*.

Lincolnshire

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Lincolnshire will be in the first batch of local authorities that will be recommended for consideration by the local government commission when it is established.

Mr. Portillo: We are still considering what would be the most balanced and manageable programme of reviews for the Local Government Commission.

Parish and Town Councils

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the university of Aston business school to report on the national survey of parish and town councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have received the results of this survey. The university of Aston business school is preparing its final report which we hope to publish in the new year.

Volatile Organic Compounds

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environmnent what progress has been made in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on a protocol controlling emissions of volatile organic compounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Negotiation of a protocol to the 1979 convention on long-range transboundary air pollution, which would control the emissions of volatile organic compounds—VOCs—or their transboundary fluxes, has now been successfully completed and the United Kingdom today became one of the first signatories to the protocol.

VOCs are major precursors of ground level azone, a pollutant which can affect human health and damage crops and trees. Ground level ozone is an international problem, and some of the worst ozone episodes in the United Kingdom have significant contributions of continental origin. It therefore needs to be tackled by international agreement.

The new protocol is the first international commitment to VOC abatement across the board. It obliges most parties to secure a 30 per cent. overall reduction in their VOC emissions between 1988 and 1999. Other basic obligations include requirements, two years after the protocol enters into force, to apply national or international emission standards to new sources of VOCs, taking account of guidance on control technologies given in the protocol; to apply national or international measures to products that contain solvents and promote the use of products with low or nil content; and to foster public participation in VOC emission control.

The United Kingdom is already taking a number of steps which will help it to comply with the protocol, which represents an important step forward in international action to improve the quality of our environment. I am arranging for a copy of the protocol to be placed in the Library of the House.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be meeting members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Trippier: I am meeting members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee today following the inaugural meeting of the reconstituted committee. I have asked members of the new committee to look at the three particular subjects. First, I have asked them to review the radioactive waste disposal issues which are likely to arise over the next 20 years. Secondly, I have asked them to review the overall national radiation monitoring programme following the installation of phase 2 of the radioactive incident monitoring network and to make recommendations. Thirdly, I have asked them to

consider and advise on the extent and nature of the Department's radioactive substances research programme.

The members of the reconstituted committee are:

Members of the reconstituted RWMAC

Chairman: Professor John Knill—Chairman of NERC

*Dr. Jack I. Abernethy—Member of the Institute of Professional Managers and Specialists (BNFL)

*Professor Kathleen J. Anderson OBE—Depute Principal, Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh, Biologist

Dr. Helen ApSimon—Imperial College, Senior Lecturer—Atmospheric Modelling

Professor Andrew Blowers—Professor of Social Services, Open University

*Professor Keith Boddy OBE—Head of Regional Medical Physics Department, Newcastle General Hospital, Northern Region Health Authority

Professor Charles Brown—Heriot-Watt University (Marine Biologist)

Mr. Wilf Cassidy—Scientific Advisor and County Analyst Somerset CC

Dr. Roger H. Clarke—Director, National Radiological Protection Board

Dr. Martin Courtis—Director of Environmental Services Environmental Health, Carlisle DC

*Professor H. John Evans—Director of the MRC Human Genetics Unit at Western General Hospital, Edinburgh

*Dr. Ron H. Flowers—Chief Technologist (Nuclear), AEA Technology

Mr. Michael Folger—Managing Director, UK Nirex Ltd

Dr. Eleanor James—Lecturer Mathematics, University of Aberystwyth, Member of Executive Committee of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales

*Professor Gilbert Kelling—Professor of Geology and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele

Miss Angela M. Killick—Chairman, Hampstead District Health Authority

Dr. John McKeown—Director of Safety, Scottish Nuclear

Mr. George J. Medley OBE—Director World Wide Fund for Nature UK

Dr. Les A. Mitchell—Director of Technology, Nuclear Electric PLC

*Dr. William L. Wilkinson CBE—Deputy Chief Executive, BNFL

*Professor David R. Williams—Professor of Applied Chemistry, University of Wales

Those names marked with an asterisk are members who have previously served on RWMAC.

Council House Sales

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district authorities in the south-west region all capital receipts from the sale of council houses received each year since the introduction of right to buy.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The total discounted value of all sales of houses and flats for each year from 1980-81, as reported by local authorities, are in the table. Actual cash receipts in any year will depend on the extent to which the sales were financed by loans from the authorities.

South Western Region[1]

Discounted value of all sales (£ '000)

Local authority	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Bath	2,491	2,197	1,769	2,013	1,835	1,416	2,359	4,993	7,430	3,177	1,888
Bristol	0	14,263	19,236	11,870	12,537	9,339	9,307	13,229	23,430	25,019	11,579
Kingswood	316	4,155	4,847	2,093	1,658	1,389	1,264	2,487	5,591	2,955	1,069
Northavon	1,906	2,538	3,699	3,039	2,315	1,395	1,931	2,379	6,558	n/a	1,922
Wansdyke	3,359	3,066	2,317	1,581	1,685	1,633	2,335	3,336	6,651	3,019	1,063
Woodspring	335	6,520	n/a	6,358	4,625	n/a	5,325	5,553	10,268	7,983	3,914
Caradon	0	985	2,052	1,462	1,657	1,125	1,468	1,823	4,978	n/a	n/a
Carrick	894	2,445	1,722	673	n/a	1,510	n/a	n/a	2,945	n/a	1,378
Kerrier	0	2,456	1,072	850	770	730	663	829	2,098	1,370	653
North Cornwall	0	1,926	2,118	1,946	1,564	1,154	1,271	1,621	4,788	4,613	1,816
Penwith	838	848	1,172	1,355	815	824	n/a	1,621	2,678	2,686	852
Restormel	45	2,429	1,889	1,382	1,056	933	1,227	1,657	4,066	1,533	937
Isles of Scilly	0	0	60	60	16	35	27	143	77	n/a	32
East Devon	1,519	1,285	1,843	3,154	2,268	1,742	2,181	4,181	6,316	3,748	1,585
Exeter	1,133	1,958	2,340	2,520	2,294	2,635	n/n	n/a	n/a	5,075	1,834
Mid Devon	0	1,685	3,444	2,124	1,675	1,304	1,894	3,363	4,290	1,857	1,083
North Devon	0	2,369	3,409	1,800	n/a	n/a	1,789	2,521	4,396	2,750	1,180
Plymouth	5,296	5,539	9,420	8,021	4,763	n/a	6,309	7,612	15,991	19,310	7,426
South Hams	732	1,380	2,030	1,840	1,765	1,981	1,468	2,236	3,181	3,294	1,443
Teignbridge	n/a	2,632	2,359	1,922	1,780	2,252	2,055	2,424	7,265	5,362	1,406
Torbay	622	915	1,360	1,948	2,154	1,983	2,320	n/a	11,619	4,713	1,692
Torridge	18	2,776	1,245	928	723	677	1,052	1,481	2,924	1,596	775
West Devon	860	1,244	1,031	1,272	1,220	1,091	846	n/a	2,010	1,524	n/a
Bournemouth	1,088	3,199	2,870	5,599	3,861	3,060	3,959	5,214	9,340	5,311	2,730
Christchurch	768	960	902	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,422	n/a	1,144	n/a
East Dorset	865	924	1,091	n/a	1,602	1,252	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Dorset	597	1,386	1,912	1,441	1,379	1,309	1,374	2,571	3,646	2,335	1,181
Poole	1,087	963	4,217	5,790	4,484	3,195	4,113	n/a	6,241	8,937	2,583
Purbeck	844	1,583	1,182	1,237	1,650	908	1,236	1,382	2,768	3,250	n/a
West Dorset	10	2,469	3,933	2,623	2,390	2,566	4,691	3,166	5,462	2,950	1,839
Weymouth and Portland	789	1,401	2,590	6,317	2,014	1,326	1,992	2,711	3,910	2,803	898
Cheltenham	1,197	3,672	3,394	2,905	1,161	1,793	1,684	2,777	7,441	4,709	1,820
Cotswold	0	3,318	3,566	2,018	1,904	1,489	1,549	2,235	3,371	1,853	1,589
Forest of Dean	0	n/a	2,901	1,831	1,617	1,218	1,279	2,276	5,526	1,961	929
Gloucester	942	2,533	2,805	1,744	1,661	1,207	1,841	3,125	4,436	n/a	1,573
Stroud	1,527	2,666	3,232	2,491	2,129	2,046	2,643	2,116	5,702	4,594	1,425
Tewkesbury	454	4,241	2,536	1,768	1,191	1,026	1,024	2,057	3,682	2,046	1,234
Mendip	1,601	3,287	2,392	2,587	2,587	2,823	3,489	3,614	7,797	n/a	1,999
Sedgemoor	1,260	3,805	4,253	2,552	1,486	2,140	2,434	3,610	4,770	4,965	2,272
South Somerset	1,829	2,872	3,237	2,882	3,193	2,588	3,521	6,016	12,007	6,321	3,337

Local authority	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Taunton Deane	1,877	2,596	1,997	1,935	2,200	2,306	2,581	3,889	6,370	4,338	2,042
West Somerset	83	1,507	2,170	1,040	624	561	421	982	1,692	999	516
Kennet	642	832	2,291	3,363	1,575	1,556	1,762	2,835	5,686	n/a	2,086
North Wiltshire	680	2,683	2,812	2,585	2,619	2,791	2,691	3,660	6,749	4,473	1,783
Salisbury	0	2,979	3,456	2,524	2,475	2,225	3,041	3,877	6,081	6,720	n/a
Thamesdown	0	n/a	9,519	5,664	4,586	4,888	n/a	n/a	12,858	10,936	3,706
West Wiltshire	2,878	2,514	3,042	n/a	1,629	2,863	4,113	3,551	6,296	3,550	1,285

[1] Figures shown are as reported by individual authorities.
n/a indicates that no data is available.'

Cats

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department offers to land owners and others concerning the control of straying domestic or feral cats.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.
None. I am not aware of any demand for such advice.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Baltic Gold

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the negotiations with the Baltic states on the Baltic gold.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Talks were held with an Estonian delegation on 7 November; a Latvian delegation on 8 November; and a Lithuanian delegation on 13 November. The discussions were friendly and useful progress was made. In each case it was agreed that a further round of discussions be held soon.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his meetings with representatives of Lithuania concerning repayment of the Baltic gold.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the question of the gold when he met President Landsbergis in Blackpool on 8 October. Subsequently talks on the gold and other financial issues were held in London on 13 November with a Lithuanian delegation led by the Lithuanian deputy Foreign Minister. It was agreed that a further meeting be held soon.

Libya

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans to reopen diplomatic relations with Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are no such plans.

Yugoslavia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of refugees fleeing Yugoslavia and going into Italy, Hungary and Austria.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A total of 35,000 Yugoslav refugees have registered in Hungary. Between 5,000 and 8,000 refugees are believed to have arrived in Austria. Since there is no visa requirement for Yugoslavs travelling to Italy, no figures are available for refugees there.

Libya

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the numbers of British citizens employed in Libya during the past five years to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Figures are available only for 1988, 1989 and 1990. We estimate that 5,000 British nationals, including dependants, were living and working in Libya in 1988 and 1989 and around 5,500 in 1990.

EC Competence

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will veto the extension of EC competence into any areas not directly related to the establishment of the single market.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A number of proposals have been put forward in the intergovernmental conference on political union for extensions of EC competence. We consider them on their merits, but the Government have made clear that a significant increase in competence would be undesirable.

Media Funding

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *525*, if he will place copies of the papers concerning the *Morning Star* and Pergamon Press in the Library.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We will do so when they have been translated.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are committed to a comprehensive test ban within the context of general and complete disarmament. Because our security will depend for the foreseeable future on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons, we have a continuing need to carry out nuclear tests to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our deterrent.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom delegate

voted on the draft resolution on a comprehensive test ban treaty (Document A/C. 1/46/L.4) at the United Nations on 11 November.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom abstained on the resolution in the first committee.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards a moratorium on United Kingdom nuclear tests.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have a continuing need to carry out tests to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards a negotiated gradual reduction in the number of nuclear tests worldwide.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This is primarily a matter for the United States and Soviet Union. The United Kingdom has only a limited test programme.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the potential impact of a comprehensive test ban treaty on the futher proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The 1968 non-proliferation treaty—NPT—is the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. A comprehensive test ban would not change the policies of those states not parties to the NPT, or prevent certain countries like Iraq who are parties to the treaty from seeking a nuclear capability.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the potential impact of a comprehensive test ban treaty on the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons arsenal.

Mr. Garel-Jones: For as long as the United Kingdom's security and that or our allies relies on our possession of a minimal nuclear deterrent, the United Kingdom will have a requirement to carry out tests from time to time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs (Foreign Prisoners)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who are foreign nationals and are at present serving prison sentences in prisons in England and Wales for conviction for seeking to import illegal drugs into the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information readily available does not distinguish the different types of drugs offence.

On 30 June 1990, the latest date for which information is available, about 1,090 males and 160 females recorded as foreign nationals were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales under sentences for drugs offences.

Prisoners in Police Accommodation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost *(a)* to his Department and *(b)* to police authorities, of holding prisoners in police accommodation during the action by prison officers to limit numbers at Cardiff prison (i) as a total to date and (ii) in each month to date.

Mrs. Rumbold: Separate information on the cost of holding Cardiff prisoners in police cells is not collected centrally. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Car Theft (Guidance to Magistrates)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued to magistrates on passing those convicted of taking away a motor vehicle without consent to a higher court for sentencing.

Mrs. Rumbold: The power to commit for sentence does not apply to the current offence of taking a vehicle without consent, which is triable summarily only. We shall shortly bring forward proposals for a new offence of aggravated taking carrying more severe punishment in the Crown court. Magistrates would be able to commit an offender convicted of the new offence to the Crown court for sentence.

Bail Offenders

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of crimes committed by individuals granted bail during the last 12 months;

(2) how many police officers have been injured or assaulted by persons who were on bail at the time of the offence during the last 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of recorded offences committed by persons who were on bail is not available separately.

Correspondence

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Parole Board was informed about the case of a prisoner about whom the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill wrote to the Minister of State in the Home Office on 17 September; and when he expects to receive a reply from the Parole Board.

Mrs. Rumbold: The case was referred to the Parole Board on 28 October 1991 and is scheduled for consideration on 27 November. I will write to the hon. Member once the outcome is known.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of putting a potential immigrant through a test to determine whether he or she has sufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh, or Gaelic languages.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no language test for potential immigrants. In a small number of cases, it may be necessary to make special inquiries to establish that applicants for naturalisation meet the statutory requirement to have a sufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language. The cost of these inquiries cannot be separately identified from the cost of other inquiries that are made in particular applications.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning convicted and remand prisoners being kept in police stations because prisons are full; whether he has any immediate plans to reduce the number of prisoners being held in police cells in Leicester; and whether he has any timetable for ending the holding of convicted and remand prisoners in police stations nationwide.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received a large number of representations from hon. Members and others about this problem. As my hon. Friend has made clear, he has taken a number of steps to reduce the numbers held in police cells, by converting young offender establishments to adult use, deferring the closure of wings, and retaining in use establishments which would otherwise have closed.

Because the arrangements for holding prisoners in police cells are co-ordinated nationally through the police mutual aid co-ordination centre, it is not possible to predict the effect of these measures on police cells in particular areas. While not being able to predict accurately when the problem will be solved, I can say that I believe the measures taken, together with new prisons opening, will relieve the pressure in the foreseeable future.

Sunday Trading

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on which Acts of Parliament are in force governing which shops and markets may open and what goods may legally be sold on Sundays in England; and who has responsibility for enforcing such Acts.

Mrs. Rumbold: Part IV of the Shops Act 1950 contains the general prohibition on Sunday trading in England and Wales. It also contains provisions for partial exemption from, and modification to, that general prohibition, and for there to be, in schedules 5, 6 and 7 to the Act, lists of exempted transactions. Special exemptions from the general prohibition are also made in the Tyne and Wear Act 1976 for the Quayside market in Newcastle upon Tyne; in the West Midlands County Council Act 1980 for the national exhibition centre in Birmingham; and in the Greater London Council (General Powers) Acts 1981 and 1983 for exhibitions, trade fairs and conferences held at certain specified premises in Greater London.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing this area of the law.

Street Lighting

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has on the link between the level of crime and poor street lighting.

Mr. John Patten: Recent independent research for the Home Office ("The Influence of Street Lighting on Crime and Fear of Crime", Crime Prevention Unit paper 28 and "The Effect of Better Street Lighting on Crime and Fear: a Reveiw", Crime Prevention Unit paper 29, both papers published in August 1991 and copies available in the Library) has shown that good street lighting is helpful in reducing the fear of crime but has little effect on crime itself, except perhaps in small localised spots where lighting is particularly inadequate. Other research has shown that it can also, in some cases, reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour.

Personation

Mr. Brando-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the guidelines to presiding officers at polling stations in order to minimise the risk of personation.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Revised and updated Home Office guidance for acting returning officers was issued in September of this year. If my hon. Friend is aware of a particular problem with regard to personation, perhaps he would consider writing to me about it.

Retailers (Crime)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the percentage of annual retail turnover lost through unauthorised entry to premises by retailers in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the percentage lost by similar crime from retailers in other EC countries.

Mr. John Patten: It is estimated that retailers lose some 2 per cent. of turnover annually through the disappearance of stock. This loss includes thefts of all descriptions; the proportion attributable to unauthorised entry is not known and cannot be ascertained.

Information about losses elsewhere in the EC is not available.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give separate figures for spending by the Metropolitan police on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1991-92 and budgets for 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 November 1991]:* I understand from the Commissioner that expenditure by the Metropolitan police on all forms of recruitment and other advertising, and other promotional material in each financial year since 1979-80 is as follows (it is not possible to give separate spending figures for the years before 1987-88):

	£
1979-80	759,000
1980-81	967,000
1981-82	1,062,000
1982-83	1,028,000
1983-84	1,675,000
1984-85	1,747,000
1985-86	1,868,000
1986-87	2,269,000

	Television advertising	*Radio advertising*	*Newspaper advertising*	*Other promotional literature*
	£	£	£	£
1987-88	—	3,000	1,722,000	1,111,000
1988-89	—	6,000	1,881,000	1,258,000
1989-90	472,000	15,000	1,660,000	663,000

	Television advertising	Radio advertising	Newspaper advertising	Other promotional literature
	£	£	£	£
1990-91	683,000	59,000	1,065,000	1,322,000
[1]1991-92	200,000	66,000	1,110,000	1,852,000

[1] Estimated out-turn.

Decisions on expenditure for 1992-93 have yet to be settled.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure by the Metropolitan police on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1991-92 and budget for 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 November 1991]:* I understand from the Commissioner that expenditure on staff and accommodation costs of the directorate of public affairs, and on recruitment and other advertising and other promotional literature, in each financial year since 1985-86 and estimate expenditure for 1991-92 are as follows:

	£
1985-86	3,622,861
1986-87	4,444,103
1987-88	4,555,000
1988-89	5,475,000
1989-90	5,366,000
1990-91	5,921,000
[1]1991-92	6,274,000

[1] Estimated out-turn.

Information for the years prior to 1985-86 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Decisions on expenditure for 1992-93 have yet to be settled.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Education Expenditure

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the percentage element of central Government support in local education authority expenditure for each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Eggar: The bulk of central Government support for local authority expenditure is channelled through revenue support grant, which is not hypothecated to individual services. Latest available published data suggest that specific and special grants to local authorities falling within the Department of Education and Science programme have accounted for the following percentages of local authority recurrent education spending:

	Per cent.
1979-80	6
1980-81	7
1981-82	7
1982-83	6
1983-84	6
1984-85	6
1985-86	6
1986-87	5
1987-88	6
1988-89	6
1989-90	[1]7
1990-91	[1]9

[1] estimated

Expenditure by local authorities on education is also supported by grants within the programmes of a range of other Government departments, including grants made under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, the urban programme, the technical and vocational education initiative, and the work-related further education programme.

Health Care

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science is he will make it his policy to include individual self health care in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's policy is to secure that young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote their immediate and long-term good health. To that end, aspects of health education are already included, wherever relevant, in a number of national curriculum foundation subjects.

Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish the final report of the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The final report of the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils is published today, covering the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1991. The board's responsibilities were transferred to the Universities Funding Council and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on 1 April this year.

The computer board's remit was to:

—assist United Kingdom universities in keeping at the forefront of information systems (IS) developments in support of their academic research;

—promote innovation, sound practice and value for money in the provision and use of information systems; and

—foster universities' interaction on IS matters with the wider academic and research community.

I pay tribute to the computer board's achievements over the past 25 years. Thanks to the board, the use of computers in the universities is now spread extensively over all subject areas. Before it began its work it was the preserve of only a few specialists.

The board's vital contribution to this process was in helping and encouraging the universities to develop information systems strategies while also taking account of the rapid pace of technological change, initiating developments and promoting sound procurement procedures.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to lay before parliament the annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council—AFRC—has been submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend as required by the Science and Technology Act 1965. A copy is being placed in the House today.

During the period covered by the report a new chairman, Mr. Alistair Grant, and a new director general, Professor Thomas Blundell FRS, have been appointed to the council.

I am pleased that the AFRC has continued to make notable achievements under their leadership. For example, scientists at its Institute of Plant Science Research have identified and isolated a single plant gene which controls the development of flowers—the most productive part of the plant and also the source of grain, fruit and seed for propagation. Research on seed oils is providing new options for industry, including use of enzymes to upgrade low value oils and expansion of the industrial use of oilseed crops in the manufacture of plastics, lubricants and pharmaceuticals.

In 1990-91, the AFRC launched a new £9 million programme over four years on the biology of spongiform encephalopathies, involving seven universities, including an award to the AFRC centre for genome research in Edinburgh, the AFRC institute of animal health and the joint AFRC/MRC neuropathogenesis unit. AFRC scientists are also co-ordinating a 1·2 million ecu programme, involving 16 laboratories in eight European countries, to produce a genetic map of the pig. This will allow breeders to identify genes that determine commercially important traits, such as temperament, litter size and meat quality, and will greatly advance livestock breeding programmes. AFRC's scientists are participating in more than 50 EC co-ordinated programmes and the council has signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with its Dutch counterpart and has commenced a programme of joint research fellowships with its French counterpart.

I congratulate the council on these and numerous other achievements.

Science Budget

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what rates of inflation he has applied in estimating the real increases in the science budget over the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend used the forecast Treasury GDP deflators of 4·5 per cent. for 1992-93, 3·75 per cent. for 1993-94 and 3 per cent. for 1994-95 announced in the 1991 autumn statement.

Women's Institutes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from women's institutes concerning their responses to the White Paper on education and training for the 21st century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a large number of such representations. I met representatives of the National Federation of Women's Institutes on 31 October.

Science Policy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what preparations have been made by his Department to make an input on science policy for the 21st century, to the United Nations conference on environment and development in June 1992.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department and the research councils are providing input to the Department of the Environment, which is responsible for co-ordinating the Government's preparation for the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Global Science Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department will be represented at the ASCEND 21 global science conference organised in Vienna on 24 to 29 November by the International Council of Scientific Unions.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The ASCEND 21 global science conference in Vienna, attendance at which is by personal invitation to scientific experts, will be attended by 12 scientists from the United Kingdom, including a member of the Natural Environment Research Council and three members of its staff.

Higher Education

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he proposes to ensure parity of treatment for students in higher education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The higher education funding councils, set up under the Further and Higher Education Bill now before Parliament, will be required to eliminate unjustified differences in funding methodologies between universities, polytechnics and colleges, while safeguarding the best of the distinctive missions of individual institutions.

Pupil Numbers

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in rank order by percentage change of total pupil numbers for each of the last three years giving in each instance the percentage change for each authority in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* 16 to 18 years age groups.

Mr. Fallon: Information on the percentage change of full-time equivalent pupil numbers, in each of the age groups requested, within each local education authority and the rank order of each local education authority in England for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991—provisional—has been placed in the Library.

WALES

Local Government Finance Bill

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what effect he estimates the proposals in the Local Government Finance Bill will have on inward migration into Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I do not expect that the Local Government Finance Bill will have any material effect on the pattern of migration.

New Dwellings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of new dwellings constructed in Wales in each of the past 10 years by *(a)* councils and *(b)* housing associations.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Annual data from 1975 to 1990 were published in table 2.3 of "Welsh Housing Statistics No. 11, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

TECs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the chairmen of training and enterprise councils to discuss their budget plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have regular meetings with the TEC chairmen in Wales and arrangements are being made for our next meeting at which a range of issues will be discussed.

Employment Initiatives

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will propose initiatives amongst the young males in Wales who are unemployed.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are providing a wide range of employment and training programmes focused on both young men and women. All those under 18 not in full-time education or training are guaranteed the offer of a training place, recruitment into employment training affords priority to those aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months, and the employment action scheme enables the unemployed to contribute their skills and efforts to work of value for their area while at the same time gaining work experience. The training and enterprise councils are tailoring these schemes to local labour market and are also able to introduce their own initiatives to meet the needs of young people in their areas. In addition the Employment Service has a range of measures to help young people into work.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, since 1988, any auditing firms have been criticised in more than two DTI inspectors' reports.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. Once such firm has been criticised in more than two inspectors' reports published since 1988.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has plans to propose legislation under which companies would be required to publish the fees paid to auditors for recruitment of company executives.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any staff from accountancy firms criticised by his Department's inspectors are currently seconded to his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The Department currently has one secondee who is a staff member of an accountancy firm which has been criticised in a published inspector's report during the period since June 1979. A further two secondees are from an accountancy firm, the predecessors of which have been criticised.

Political Donations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to propose legislation under which all political donations by any company would require a specific resolution at the annual general meeting.

Mr. Redwood: No. There is a general requirement in the Companies Acts for directors' reports to disclose the amount and beneficiary of any money given for political purposes exceeding in aggregate £200. This report must be circulated to all shareholders before the annual general meeting. Shareholders may then comment on the donations and put down resolutions on them in the same way as they can for other aspects of the management of the company's funds. In the Government's view this gives shareholders sufficient protection.

AGIP (Africa)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the inquiries he has conducted into the AGIP (Africa) affair.

Mr. Redwood: It is not our practice to confirm or deny the existence of Companies Act inquiries in relation to a particular case unless there has been an announcement of an investigation.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what rights the public has under the terms under which he has given recognition to the supervisory bodies *(a)* to know the findings of the bodies' monitoring activities and *(b)* to require the bodies to investigate complaints against auditing firms.

Mr. Redwood: The recognised supervisory bodies' monitoring reports on individual auditing firms are intended to be internal documents. However, I understand that the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants proposes to include in its annual report a report of its monitoring unit, and the other bodies are considering what information to publish. It was a precondition for recognition that the supervisory bodies had effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints, details of which are readily available from the bodies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to propose legislation under which any member of the public will have a right to know shortcomings in auditing firms discovered by the recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Accounting Standards Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which the Accounting Standards Board will be required to open all its meetings to the public.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Fraud, Tenerife

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the Spanish Government over the alleged fraud which has led to the forthcoming foreclosure of 101 apartments on the Parque Don Jose, Costa Del Sileneis, Tenerife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I sympathise with the owners of the apartments at Parque Don Jose, but I believe that the applicable contracts are subject to Spanish law in which case neither the United Kingdom Government nor English law has any jurisdiction. Even if the contract was subject to English law, in so far as this is a civil dispute between purchasers and the developers, it would be for the civil courts to resolve. If an allegation of fraud or other criminal activity is involved it would be a matter for the police. It would not therefore be appropriate for me to make representations to the Spanish Government.

Hostile Bids

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what period he will allow for negotiation of undertakings relating to a hostile bid under section 75G of the Fair Trading Act 1973 as amended in 1989 to protect the public need for relevant information.

Mr. Redwood: The timetable established for negotiating undertakings under section 75G of the Fair Trading Act 1973 will depend on the circumstances of each particular case. The Secretary of State will wish to secure undertakings as soon as practicable while ensuring that third parties are given a reasonable opportunity to comment on what might be appropriate to remedy the adverse effects expected to arise from the merger situation.

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the degree of proof a hostile bidder under section 75G of the Fair Trading Act 1973 as amended in 1989 must provide to satisfy him that assets acquired in a hostile bid will be sold to avoid a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: Undertakings given by a company under section 75G of the Fair Trading Act 1973 to divest or separate part of a merged business in lieu of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are enforceable in the courts. Alternatively, the Secretary of State may make an order to remedy the expected adverse effects of the merger when it appears to him that an undertaking has not been or will not be fulfilled.

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken and intends to take to discourage foreign manufacturers producing fraudulent imitations of United Kingdom manufacturers' footwear products.

Mr. Redwood: Our legislation provides effective remedies against the sale of counterfeit goods in the United Kingdom. The Government also recognise the importance of discouraging international trade in counterfeit goods. One of their chief objectives in the current GATT Uruguay round negotiations on trade-related aspects of intellectual property is to achieve strengthened multilateral rules for combating trade in counterfeit goods, which should be of benefit to all sectors of United Kingdom manufacturing.

Political Risk Insurance

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that political risk insurance is readily available to British exporters on terms which enable them to compete on equal terms with their overseas competitors.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade during the debate on the Lords Amendments to the Export and Investment Guarantees Bill on 22 October, *Official Report* columns 815-17, in which he described the two forms of reinsurance which the Government, through ECGD, will provide to the insurance services business after the latter's privatisation.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the resignation of the chief executive of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, Mr. Malcolm Stephens.

Mr. Lilley: Mr. Stephens will be leaving ECGD later this year to take up the post of chief executive of the London Chamber of Commerce. I should like to record my gratitude for his effective and professional leadership of ECGD over the last four and a half years. I wish him well in his new career in the chamber movement, to which the Government attach great importance.

Astra plc

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date, on what grounds, and by reference to which section of legislation he referred problems at Astra plc to his inspectors; if he will name the inspectors involved in this investigation; and when he expects the inspectors to report.

Mr. Redwood: Following an application by the company, Colin Percy Farquharson Rimer QC and John White FCA, were appointed inspectors on 16 August 1990 under section 431(2)(c) of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of the company. My right hon. Friend has asked them to look in particular at the events surrounding the rights issue by the company in July 1989. The inspectors are making good progress, but I cannot say when they will complete their report.

Film Industry

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any proposals to help stimulate investment in films; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: A working party, chaired by my Department, is looking at ways of increasing private sector investment in film production in the United Kingdom. It will report to me when it has completed its work.

Industrial Policy

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: I have no plans at present to meet representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI, but officials of my Department keep in touch with them on a wide range of business matters. I met a large number of CBI representatives when I attended their national conference on 4 November 1991.

Relocation Assistance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he carries out of the financial viability of companies before providing them with relocation assistance.

Mr. Redwood: Grants are not normally made available by my Department solely for the purposes of relocation. Where such a case may qualify for regional selective assistance, a financial appraisal of the commercial prospects of the company would be undertaken to enable a judgment to be made about the viability of the business, before any offer of grant is considered. A simplified appraisal is used for smaller value cases.

Copenhagen Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department was invited to participate in the conference on ecologically sustainable industrial development in Copenhagen on 14 to 18 October 1991.

Mr. Lilley: Yes, my Department was represented. I will place a copy of the conference's report in the House Library as soon as possible.

UN Environment Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make it his policy to put forward proposals for the promotion of hand tools as part of a strategy for appropriate technological support to the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in June 1992;

(2) what preparations have been made by his Department to make an input on business, trade and technology issues for the United Nations conference on environment and development in June 1992.

Mr. Lilley: I draw the hon. Member's attention to the report "Global Climate Change: the Role of Technology Transfer" which was prepared for UNCED by Touche Ross and funded jointly by my Department and the Overseas Development Administration. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

This report aimed to offer a constructive contribution to UNCED's discussions on technology transfer in the context of climate change. I am pleased to say it has been well received by delegates to the preparatory meetings for UNCED and has helped focus on this subject in a positive way.

One of the findings of the report emphasises the importance of appropriate technologies reflecting the different technological needs, abilities and circumstances of developing countries.

Officials in my Department have also established contact with the Business Council for Sustainable Development—BCSD—the body set up by Mr. Maurice Strong, secretary-general to UNCED, to provide the business input to UNCED. Links have also been established between BCSD and the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment set up by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, and myself.

Post Offices

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *61*, how many Post Office Crown branch offices in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* South Wales are currently in each of the three categories A, B and C specified by Post Office Counters.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The numbers of Crown post offices currently in categories A, B and C in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* South Wales Counters district are as follows:

	A	*B*	*C*
Britain	484	430	161
South Wales	20	12	

The categories A, B and C referred to represent very broad sizing guidelines indicating large, medium-sized and small offices respectively. As such, the number in each category should not be regarded as hard and fast.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Single European Act

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will arrange for copies of the Single European Act to be available at the Vote Office ahead of the debate on 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: Copies of the Single European Act were placed in the House Library on a Command Paper basis—Cm 372—in 1988.

I understand that copies will also be placed in the Vote Office in advance of the debate. Members can, of course, also order a copy from HMSO on a "green form" basis.

Empty Offices

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many offices are currently empty in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. MacGregor: Thirteen.

Members' Offices

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. and right hon. Members now have a single office; and when he expects that all hon. and right hon. Members will be so provided for.

Mr. MacGregor: As a result of the occupation of No. 1 Parliament street, 334 Members now have single offices either in the Palace of Westminster or one of the parliamentary outbuildings. A small number of additional offices will become available next year following the conversion of accommodation in Speaker's Court. The objective of providing a single office for each Member who wants one will be fulfilled on completion of phase 2 of the new parliamentary building. It is impossible to predict with any accuracy at this stage when this will be achieved, since to a large extent progress on this building is dependent on progress in the construction of London Underground's new Westminster station. The new parliamentary building will certainly not be ready for occupation before 1996.

Contracts of Employment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to publish the names of those hon. Members who have not issued a contract of employment to any of their staff paid from the office costs allowance.

Mr. MacGregor: No.

Medical Facilities

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to increase medical facilities within Parliament for the benefit of hon. Members and their staffs.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The Houses of Parliament occupational health service was established on 1 March 1991. It is being run by a full-time occupational health manager with assistance from a full-time nurse. The manager is qualified in occupational health and St. Thomas's hospital are providing medical back-up and the services of a part-time occupational health physician.

The aim of the service is to provide general health care and to promote and maintain the highest attainable standards of occupational health in the two Houses. The Members' medical surveillance scheme, which has operated for a number of years, continues unchanged.

There are at present no plans to increase on these arrangements, which have only recently been introduced.

EMPLOYMENT

Skills Training

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what meetings he has had with staff of the former skills training agencies sold to TICC Ltd. and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I met representatives of the staff and trade unions on 30 September 1991.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department proposes to take with regard to the former employees of TICC Skill Centres Ltd. and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: With the completion of the sale of the Skills Training Agency in May 1990, all the operating businesses passed to the private sector and their subsequent activities have not been a matter for the Government. However, we are aware of the position of former civil servants employed by TICC Ltd. and am currently considering the representations made to the Department by TICC's staff and their trade union.

Unemployment

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 10 constituencies with the lowest level of unemployment in England, Scotland and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: For areas with different sized work forces, such as parliamentary constituencies, the only meaningful comparisons are based on unemployment rates. These are not available at the level of parliamentary constituencies.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the up-to-date figures of recruitment of health and safety inspectors over the last 12 months.

Mr. Jackson: In the year ended 1 November 1991 a total of 171 inspectors were recruited by the Health and Safety Executive. A further 63 joined the organisation with the transfers of responsibility for offshore and railway safety.

Job Losses

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the number of jobs lost to the United Kingdom by outward divestment or the export of British jobs to overseas countries, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: I am not aware of any such assessment.

Co-operatives (Aid)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations which have received or are to receive pump-priming cash or other grant aid from his Department in order to help develop co-operatives.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has agreed to provide pump priming support for the United Kingdom Co-operative Council. A number of other proposals are under consideration at present for development funding.

Co-operative ventures and other organisations involved with the co-operative sector can also receive assistance indirectly from the Department through the training and enterprise councils or local enterprise companies, bodies such as the Prince's Youth Business Trust and a range of Government initiatives available for small businesses.

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to reintroduce section 4 grants in England to fund tourism-related projects; how many representations he has had over the withdrawal of section 4 grants; what consultations he has had with the British Tourist Authority regarding section 4 grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: No. Funding for the section 4 scheme in England was withdrawn in 1989 because of doubts about its value and effectiveness. Nothing since the scheme's suspension has given cause to believe that its reintroduction in England would be justified.

The Department has on occasions, received representations in support of reintroducing some form of financial assistance for tourism projects. The British Tourist Authority has not offered any comment on the withdrawal of funding for the section 4 scheme in England.

Shoe Repairing

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to provide and encourage improved training provision for the shoe repairing industry.

Mr. Jackson: Provision of training is primarily the responsibility of employers, but Employment Department funding is being provided to support youth training and employment training in the shoe repairing industry. The Department is also helping the industry to define and meet its training needs by promoting more effective industry training organisation arrangements. Funding is also being provided for the development of vocational qualifications in shoe repair.

Wages Inspectorate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will expand the wages inspectorate.

Mr. Jackson: No. The wages inspectorate has adequate resources to enforce wages council orders effectively.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Minister for the Arts, whether any items have been accepted in lieu of tax and allocated so far in the present Session.

Mr. Renton: Since my announcement on 25 July, at column *794*, in response to a question from the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), I am pleased to inform the House that an offer of English porcelain has been accepted in lieu of £77,000 tax. The porcelain was offered on condition that it be allocated to the Fitzwilliam museum, Cambridge and it has, therefore, been allocated to that institution.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funds are currently being paid to the Health Education Authority for AIDS awareness campaigns;

(2) how much expenditure on AIDS awareness is targeted at ethnic minorities;

(3) how much money is paid yearly by the Health Education Authority to the National AIDS Trust and upon what conditions as to the following of an equal opportunities policy by the National AIDS Trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the current financial year the Health Education Authority (HEA) has been allocated £9·5 million to carry forward AIDS mass media campaigns in the United Kingdom and for supporting AIDS educational work in England.

Of this sum £640,000 has been allocated to media, project and research work directed at ethnic minorities. In addition, health authorities have been asked to give priority attention to the HIV educational needs of ethnic minorities in developing local HIV prevention work.

Funding to the National AIDS Trust (NAT) is for specific projects, as follows:

	£
1990-92 NAT young people's initiative and publication of a report	46,000
1991-93 Funding over three years for the NAT HIV/AIDS women's project	105,000

The HEA has also provided £3,139 in the current year to assist the NAT in co-ordinating the United Kingdom response to world AIDS day on 1 December.

The hon. Member may wish to contact the HEA direct for information about equal opportunities policy.

Manual Lifting Injuries

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees in the NHS suffered manual lifting injuries in 1988-89; and how many suffered manual lifting injuries in 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally by the Department.

Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1986, all employers, including the national health service, are required to report certain types of industrial injuries to the Health and Safety Executive. Data of a limited and broadly classified nature are maintained by the executive in respect of those manual handling injuries reported to them.

Census

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many breaches of security occurred in collecting the 1991 census data; how many of these were by individual census numerators; how many were after the individual enumerator had passed on this information to the district co-ordinators; and how many individuals' census files were subject to security failures.

Mr. Dorrell: In the 109,700 enumeration districts in England and Wales, in which some 20 million forms were collected, 24 incidents have been reported where there were actual or potential breaches of confidentiality of census documents. In eight of these incidents forms were stolen from enumerators or collected by people impersonating enumerators. Fourteen incidents were due to errors made by field staff. One incident occurred as forms were in transit between the local census officer and the census office, as a result of which two forms are missing, believed destroyed. In the remaining incident one enumeration record book containing addresses for an enumeration district was lost in the post. The total number of census forms involved was 253, of which 121 were recovered. Of the remainder, 117 were stolen or fraudulently collected and 15 are unaccounted for.

There have been no breaches of confidentiality of census documents since the forms were delivered to the census office.

Two further incidents are under investigation, involving the alleged passing by census staff of details on other census staff to third parties.

Disablement Services Authorities

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if his Department will reimburse health authorities for their expenditure in meeting the unpaid bills passed to them from the Disablement Services Authority when it was disbanded in April 1991;

(2) how much of its unspent budget for the year 1990-91 the Disablement Services Authority returned for the year 1990-91 to the Department; when the Disablement Services Authority requested the money to be returned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Disablement Services Authority notified the Department in February 1991 of a forecast cash underspend of some £5 million on its income and expenditure account for 1990-91. That sum was transferred from class XIII, vote 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—which included provision for the authority, to class XIII, vote 1—hospital and community health services, family health services (part) and other services (England)—in the revised spring supplementary estimates presented on 28 February 1991.

In late March 1991, the authority notified the Department that it had received invoices which it wished to settle prior to its dissolution. The sum of £1 million was made available to the authority to assist it to settle some of those accounts.

In August 1991 health authorities were allocated some £3 million to meet unpaid bills inherited from the authority that extended beyond the normal period of credit. This is in addition to the £111 million revenue resources allocated to health authorities in 1991-92 for disablement services.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service patients were receiving kidney dialysis at the latest date for which figures are available; what proportion of these are aged 70 years or over; and what are the comparable figures for the private sector.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally. According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association the total number of people receiving dialysis in the United Kingdom as at 31 December 1990 was 8,857. At the end of 1989 there was one such patient over the age of 70 years for every 13 under that age.

Back Pain and Injury

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the number of working days lost to the national health service each year through back pain or back injury;

(2) what is the total amount paid out in terms of damages by the national health service to staff who have suffered back pain or back injury;

(3) what are the sickness absence costs to the national health service of back pain or back injury to staff in terms of *(a)* sick pay and *(b)* additional staffing costs to cover for sickness absence;

(4) what percentage of sickness absence in the national health service is due to back pain or back injury;

(5) what is the cost to the national health service of treating national health service staff who are off work temporarily or permanently due to back pain or back injury.

(6) how many staff leave the national health service each year due to back pain or back injury.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Dental Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to reduce the incidence of cross-infection in general dental surgeries.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has issued guidance on various occasions since the publication of the report of the Expert Advisory Group on Hepatitis in Dentistry in 1979. The chief dental officer wrote to all general dental practitioners on the subject in April 1986 and May 1988. In addition, the general principles of cross-infection control have been outlined in the publication "Guidance for Clinical Health Care Workers", a copy of which is available in the Library. The Department also contributed to the British Dental Association's revised guidance on cross-infection control. The Department regularly considers the question of further guidance on cross-infection control in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that the regulation to empower family health service authorities to inspect general dental surgeries will include the provision for financial penalties and disciplinary action when such surgeries expose their patients to unacceptable risks from cross-infection.

Mr. Dorrell: The terms of service under which dental practitioners provide general dental services under the NHS already make it clear that they must employ proper skill and attention, provide suitable equipment, and provide treatment with suitable instruments for their patients. A dentist found to have acted in breach of his terms of service is vulnerable to sanctions which may be imposed by the family health service authority.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of those hospitals providing paediatric emergency dental services staffed by the community dental service.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out by his Department into the effect of the fluoridation of drinking water on the level of morbidity in human populations.

Mr. Dorrell: A number of studies have been undertaken on behalf of the Department into major causes of morbidity in relation to fluoridation of drinking water.

These include tuberculosis, cancers, cardiovascular diseases, pulmonary diseases, peptic ulcers, renal disease, congenital malformations, thyroid disease and musculo-skeletal disorders. These, and other authoritative reviews of the extensive worldwide scientific literature, have found no evidence to show that fluoridation has any adverse effect on health.

St. Paul's Eye Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of patients from Wales treated at Liverpool's St. Paul's eye hospital in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Michael Emberton, the chairman of Liverpool health authority, for details.

Rehabilitation Consultants

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants in rehabilitation medicine were appointed, and salaries ring-fenced, by the Disablement Services Authority; how many are still in post; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest figures available show that, by 30 September 1990, 11 consultants in rehabilitation medicine had been appointed and are still in post. The remainder of these 40 newly created posts were expected to be filled by the middle of 1991, mainly by medical officers working within disablement services. Resources for disablement services are ring-fenced within total health authority cash limits for the two years, 1991-92 to 1992-93; salary costs for consultants in rehabilitation medicine are included within these ring-fenced allocations.

Hospital Social Work

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will issue guidelines to local authorities about appropriate levels of service for hospital social work.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Responsibility for providing social work services to hospitals rests with local authorities under arrangements established in 1974. Local authority circular LAC(91)14 and NHS executive letter EL(91)122 issued in October clarified the position. Copies are available in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the progress of the social services inspectorate's inspection of social care to NHS patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The inspection process is underway. Fieldwork in five local authorities in England is due to be completed in February 1992 and a report subsequently prepared.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making on establishing agreements about funding hospital social work services in London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has completed a pilot exercise to provide information about the provision of health-related social work services by local authorities to non-residents. The outcome will be discussed with the Local Authority Associations at the end of November.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that high-quality hospital social work services are part of the community care plans currently being drawn up by local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: An integral part of local authorities community care plans will be their plans for health-related social work. This was made clear in local authority circular LAC(91)14, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Hospital Appointments

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish figures setting out the number of patients who failed to attend national health service hospitals after being granted firm appointments region by region for the year to March 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in the table.

Number of patients who did not attend for appointment at consultant out-patient and general practitioner maternity clinics in 1990-91 (provisional), national health service hospitals England

Regional health authority	Referral attendances	Consultant initiated attendances	Total
Northern	65,910	286,097	352,007
Yorkshire	75,375	317,241	392,616
Trent	89,454	372,723	462,177
East Anglian	28,180	103,063	131,243
North West Thames	96,052	317,434	413,486
North East Thames	129,985	434,484	564,469
South East Thames	106,784	337,209	443,993
South West Thames	52,202	178,227	230,429
Wessex	45,156	158,850	204,006
Oxford	40,024	144,700	184,724
South Western	47,067	164,700	211,767
West Midlands	109,552	449,860	559,412
Mersey	69,520	261,015	330,535
North Western	120,796	452,390	573,186
Special health authorities	18,854	94,184	113,038
TOTAL	1,094,911	4,072,177	5,167,088

Radiotherapy

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the length of time that patients have to wait for radiotherapy at *(a)* Newcastle general hospital and *(b)* other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will outline the steps he intends to take to improve the position for patients who urgently need treatment in the area served by this hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on waiting times for individual hospitals is not held centrally. Information for regional health authorities can be obtained from the "Hospital In-patient Waiting Lists England at 31 March 1991", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimate for community care services provided jointly by the health authorities and local authorities for 1991-92 to attend to the needs of the mentally handicapped and the mentally disabled transferred into the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about joint funding by health and local authorities of community care services is not collected centrally. We do however have figures for joint finance and dowry expenditure for 1989-90. In that year, health and local authority joint finance expenditure on services for people with learning disabilities and for people with mental illness was £60·4 million and £14·5 million respectively on revenue and £9·4 million and £0·8 million respectively on capital (England only; no capital figures for eight local authorities). Health authority dowry payments to local authorities for people with learning disabilities and for people with mental illness were £1·2 million and £12·3 million respectively (England only). Joint finance and dowry arrangements are described in HC(83)6, HC(84)9 and HN(86)11, copies of which are available in the Library.

Cot Deaths

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice is now given to parents on the avoidance of cot deaths; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what progress is being made in reducing the incidence of cot deaths.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 15 November 1991, c. 681-82]:* To reinforce the advice on reducing the risk of cot deaths which has already been sent to all doctors, midwives, health visitors and other professionals concerned with the care of young babies, the Government are arranging an information campaign aimed directly at mothers and others who care for young babies. This will be led by advertising next month in the national and specialist press which invites people to obtain a leaflet setting out the main steps to be taken to reduce the risk of cot deaths. This leaflet—also available in ethnic languages—will in addition be widely distributed, for instance to doctors' surgeries, maternity units and public libraries. The intention is that the leaflet can be retained for reference by families with young babies.

Racial Equality

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many decisions have been taken by industrial tribunals that health authorities have discriminated against black employees or job applicants.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1 April this year, 38 decisions have been promulgated for cases brought under the Race Relations Act 1976 against health authorities. There were no successful applications amongst them.

SCOTLAND

Foresterhill Hospital

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Foresterhill hospital's trust application.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is presently considering the application and expects to make an announcement soon.

Violent Crime

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to tackle the problem of violent crime in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The detection and prevention of violent crime is given a high priority by police forces throughout Scotland. The Government continue to provide substantial resources to assist the police in maintaining law and order: since 1979 police expenditure has risen by more than 50 per cent. in real terms. The Government will also continue to ensure that an adequate range of penalties is available to the courts to deal with all crimes and offences, including those involving violence.

Hospital Services, Skye

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the future of Gesto hospital, Edinbane, Isle of Skye.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is a matter for Highland health board.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds are available for the care of the elderly in Skye; and what is their occupancy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the year ended 30 June 1991 there were, on average, 28 staffed national health service beds available for the care of the elderly. The occupancy rate was 60·7 per cent.

Incinerator (Granton)

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from community groups or individuals about the proposed erection of an incinerator by the Lothian Chemical Company at Granton foreshore, Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the last three months, representations about the proposed incinerator have been received from six individuals. Over the same period, none has been received from community groups.

An application by Lothian Chemical Company for the registration of an incinerator at its Granton works is currently being considered by Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate. In determining the application, account will be taken not only of the steps to be taken by the company to control emissions from the proposed plant, but of the representations made by members of the public about the application.

Careers Service

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new money will be made available to education authorities in Scotland to promote partnerships between the careers service and local employers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend expects to issue shortly further details about the development of partnerships between the Careers Service and local enterprise companies in Scotland.

Civil Actions

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he hopes to provide a substantive response to the letter of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow to the Lord Advocate, dated 30 October, concerning the legal right of an individual to raise a civil action in the High Court; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has today written to the hon. Member in response to his letter dated 30 October.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in Scotland for which management agreements are currently being negotiated, giving details of the damage threatened in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 18 November]:* The information requested is confidential to the parties.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Norwich Office (Closure)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had regarding the closure of his Department's office in Norwich; and if he will make it his policy to review the closure decision.

Mr. Curry: The Department has received representations, principally from staff representatives, about the future of the Norwich office. It sees no cause to review its decision to transfer grant and subsidy processing and other services from Norwich to a new regional service centre at Cambridge. The Norwich office will continue to provide a base for Ministry field officers and ADAS staff, as well as serving as an animal health office.

Stilton Cheese

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for the naming of Stilton cheese if the Council of Ministers accepts the Borgo report.

Mr. Gummer: The report of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development on the Commission's proposal for a council regulation on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs (the Borgo report) has not yet been considered by the plenary session of the European Parliament. It remains unclear whether the Commission's original proposal or the recommendations of the Borgo report, if acceptable, would have any effect on the naming of Stilton or whether Stilton producers would be able to seek protection for the name Stilton under the terms of the proposed regulation, since Stilton cheese is not produced in Stilton.

However, Stilton is already protected by a registered trade mark belonging to the Stilton Cheesemakers' Association, and can be used to describe only a product made in the three counties of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, which do not encompass the village of Stilton. Under the Commission proposals as they now stand, it would not be possible to register a geographical name which conflicts with a registered trade mark.

Poultry Farms

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the reports by departmental veterinary officers on matters relating to hygiene on poultry farms.

Mr. Maclean: Reports prepared by my Department's veterinary officers about hygiene on individual poultry farms are confidential and the details are not published. Information about diseases in animals including poultry are contained in such publications as the report of the chief veterinary officer, "Animal Health 1990".

Milk

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by how much he expects the United Kingdom's national milk quota for the current year to be exceeded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Experience of previous years suggests that production is likely to exceed quota by a small margin.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish hygiene-related reports on slaughterhouses within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities—district councils—are responsible for the enforcement of hygiene standards in slaughterhouses and it is for individual authorities to decide whether or not to publish related reports.

As announced on 3 April this year, agriculture departments will take over responsibility for licensing all slaughterhouses in Great Britain when new EC rules come into force on 1 January 1993. My ministerial colleagues and I are considering what information should be made publicly available when we assume this responsibility.

Clenbuterol

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of clenbuterol; and if he will make it his policy to press for a Community ban on this product.

Mr. Maclean: Clenbuterol is the active ingredient within three veterinary products licensed in the United Kingdom for use on prescription to treat respiratory and calving disorders in cattle and horses. I have no plans to press for a Community ban as this would unreasonably put a stop to such legitimate use.

I am aware of reports from other member states of the illegal use of this substance as a repartitioning agent but we have no evidence of unauthorised use of clenbuterol in Great Britain at present. Nevertheless tighter controls on such substances will be introduced within the next few weeks. Interested parties have already been consulted about these measures, which amongst other things will enable animals and carcases found to contain residues of illegally administered beta agonists, including clenbuterol, to be condemned as unfit for human consumption.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when and by what mechanism he proposes to implement Council directives 71/118 on trade in fresh poultrymeat and 89/662 concerning veterinary checks in intra-Community trade.

Mr. Maclean: EC directive 71/118, on trade in fresh poultry meat, was implemented in England and Wales by the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976 (as amended). Similar regulations were introduced in Scotland (also in 1976) and in Northern Ireland (in 1977). Detailed discussions on a range of issues arising out of the directives on veterinary checks are still on-going in Brussels. As a result mechanisms for implementation in this country of directive 89/662, which comes into force on 1 July 1992, are still under consideration.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what advice he has received from the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment regarding the use of canthaxanthin; and if he will make it his policy to ban canthaxanthin in commercial egg production.

Mr. Maclean: The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has advised that the use of canthaxanthin in animal feeds should be discontinued. The United Kingdom has urged a prohibition on its use in feed in the EC. The Commission's export committees have advised that a decision should be made when further test data are available late next year.

I have accepted this position given that any effects on consumers from intake of canthaxanthin would only occur over a long period of time and are not of an acute toxicological nature. I also understand that the use of canthaxanthin in poultry feed has declined recently.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many evaluations of pesticides under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 have been published; how many products await evaluation; and whether he intends to publish all evaluations of pesticide products.

Mr. Maclean: Since the introduction of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, a total of 41 evaluation documents have been published for new and reviewed pesticides. There are at present 54 new pesticide active ingredients that are awaiting approval, 19 of which are currently under evaluation. Evaluations will be published for each of these as and when approvals are granted. Evaluations will also be published on further pesticides considered by the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides as part of the reviews programme. When an evaluation is issued the data underlying the published evaluation are available for public scrutiny on application to the registration authorities.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his review of the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Gummer: On 23 July I announced that the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and I were undertaking a comprehensive review of the farm woodland scheme and that pending the outcome of the review we would continue to accept applications under the existing rules of the scheme until 31 March 1992. We have now completed the review and we announced on 6 November, in the context of the Government's public expenditure plans, that a successor to the farm woodland scheme, to be called the farm woodland premium scheme, will be introduced on 1 April 1992.

The new arrangements will offer increased grants for planning woodland and higher incentives to encourage farmers to convert land now in agricultural use to woodland. The aim is to enhance the farmed landscape and environment and provide a productive land use alternative to agriculture. It will also be very much easier for farmers to understand and simpler to operate than the current scheme. Detailed proposals for the new scheme have been drawn up and are being sent to the main interested organisations for comment. A copy of these proposals has been placed in the Library of the House, and they contain the following main elements:

The administration of establishment grants will be separated from that of annual incentives.

The Forestry Commission will pay the grants for planting and managing trees under the woodland grant scheme, including the better land supplement and community woodland supplement where appropriate, and Agriculture departments will pay the annual incentives under the farm woodland premium scheme. The Department of Agriculture will pay all the grants in Northern Ireland, where the enclosed land supplement is paid instead of the better land supplement.

Annual incentives of up to £250 per hectare will be paid for either 10 or 15 years, depending on the type of woodland created on arable or improved grassland. Annual incentives of £60 per hectare will be paid for trees planted on unimproved grassland in the less favoured areas only.

There will be no limit on the number of applications that can be made, but planting must not, in aggregate, exceed more than 50 per cent. of any individual agricultural unit. In addition, planting of unimproved grassland must not exceed 40 hectares of any individual agricultural unit.

The definition of "improved grassland" will now be based on the content of "productive" species. This has the advantage of being easily checked by a physical inspection and puts no restriction on the method of grassland improvement.

No quotas or targets will be set for the scheme but it will be subject to cash limits.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount received, in each of the past three years, from penalties imposed on those late in paying value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total amounts received from penalties for late submission or payment of value added tax returns, in each of the past three and current financial years are as follows:

	Total revenue £ million
Financial year ending 31 March 1989	79·1
Financial year ending 31 March 1990	82·1
Financial year ending 31 March 1991	83·1
1 April 1991 to 30 September 1991	42·7

Frozen Assets

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the assets of other countries currently frozen in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: The Bank of England issued a notice on 7 August 1990 drawing attention to the Treasury directions issued under the Emergency Laws (Re-enactments and Repeals) Act 1964, which have the effect of freezing certain Iraqi assets held in the United Kingdom. The assets of no other countries are currently frozen in the United Kingdom.

Planning Estimates

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table which provides an analysis by economic category of the 1991-92 estimated outturn for the planning total as announced in the 1991 autumn statement, on definitions consistent with those of table 3.6 of Cm. 1520.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Data for the autumn statement forecast of outturn in the current year are collected for each Department, by spending sector and in total. No economic category analysis of spending by Departments is collected at this time of the year.

It is possible, however, to provide an approximate analysis by economic category of forecast outturn in 1991-92 on the definitions used in table 3.6 of Cm. 1520, taking broad account of the nature of spending by individual Departments. This is set out in the following table. An economic category analysis of forecast outturn for 1991-92 based on Departments' assessments of the economic category composition of their spending will be provided in the supplement to the 1991 autumn statement to be published around the end of January 1992.

Planning total forecast outturn 1991-92

Economic category	*(£ billion)*
Current expenditure on goods and services	72·1
Subsidies	5·8
Current grants to persons[1]	66·3
Current grants abroad[1]	2·1
Current grants to local authorities	33·3
Distribution of non-domestic rate revenue	14·3
Net capital expenditure on assets	7·2
Capital grants to local authorities	1·4
Other capital grants	5·4
Credit approvals	4·3
Lending and other financial transactions	0·5
Privatisation proceeds	−8·0
Adjustment	0·3
Planning total	204·9

[1] These categories were combined in Cm. 1520. The figure for current grants abroad is net of other governments' contributions to the cost of the Gulf conflict.

National Heritage Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are imposed upon a landowner for the payment of tax if the agreement for inheritance tax exemptions on national heritage land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest has been broken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: If a landowner breaks an undertaking given in respect of conditionally exempt land, inheritance tax is chargeable on the current value of the property.

Wildlife Trade

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will state the level of resources allocated in 1992-93 for wildlife trade control by officers of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Customs involvement in wildlife controls extends over a wide area, embracing both health and conservation aspects. It also covers a diverse range of activities, from checks on the validity of import and export licences to investigation, as the need arises, of suspected fraud. All those activities take place within the broad framework of Customs enforcement generally, with no individual officers specialising in wildlife controls. It is therefore impracticable to identify separately those resources which are, or will be, allocated specifically to those controls.

Tobacco

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the total tax burden on the leading United Kingdom cigarette brands has increased since May 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total tax burden on the leading five cigarette brands has increased on average from 69 per cent. in May 1979 to 76 per cent. in November 1991.

Income Tax

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of income tax paid by the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers *(a)* now and *(b)* in 1979-80.

Mr. Maude: It is estimated that in 1991-92 the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers will be liable to pay about 42 per cent. of the total yield of income tax. The corresponding figure for 1979-80 is 34 per cent.

VAT Returns

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average penalty imposed in Leicestershire on those who submit value added tax returns late by *(a)* one week, *(b)* two weeks and *(c)* four weeks, respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Customs do not maintain statistics for individual counties or regions. The penalties imposed for late submission or payment of VAT returns do not vary with the length of the period between due date and receipt by Customs. Nationwide, the average penalty imposed on defaulting traders—including those who may have received more than one penalty—over the current and preceding financial years is:

	Average penalty £
Financial year ending 31 March 1989	266·24
Financial year ending 31 March 1990	375·42
Financial year ending 31 March 1991	429·39
Period from 1 April to 30 September 1991	441·41

Inheritance Tax (Business Relief)

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of increasing the present business relief on inheritance tax from 50 per cent. and 30 per cent. to 100 per cent. *(a)* if the increased relief included agricultural property and *(b)* if the increased relief excluded agricultural property.

Mr. Maude: The full-year costs of increasing these inheritance tax reliefs are estimated to be: £40 million if relief for business and agricultural property is increased to 100 per cent.; and £15 million if relief for business property only is increased to 100 per cent.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action has been taken regarding the second paragraph of article 8 of the European Community Council decision dated 12 March 1990, on multilateral surveillance and on the attainment of progressive convergence of economic policies and performance during stage one of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Maude: In accordance with the requirement in article 8 of the Council decision of 12 March 1990 to which the hon. Member refers, I have drawn the results of multilateral surveillance discussions in the Council of

Economic and Finance Ministers to the attention of the House when reporting the outcome of Council meetings in answer to questions. The annual economic report has also been deposited in the Library of the House and considered by the Select Committee on European Legislation.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Maude: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 12 November. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council established a second reading draft Budget for 1992 totalling 65,634 million ecu—£45,738 million—in commitment appropriations, compared with the total after the first reading of 65,606 million ecu—£45,718 million. Payment appropriations represent 1·14 per cent. of Community GNP, compared with a ceiling of 1·2 per cent. in the own resources decision, leaving a cash margin of around 3·5 billion ecu—£2·4 billion.

The Budget Council rejected most of the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the Council's first reading draft Budget, adopting a draft Budget broadly in line with its first reading in July, respecting the existing financial perspective ceilings. In rejecting most of the Parliament's proposals the Council was able to put back into the draft Budget a provisional figure of 400 million ecu—£279 million—for technical assistance to the Soviet Union, and a total of 160 million ecu—£111 million—for emergency food and humanitarian aid. The following table summarises the second reading draft Budget, with reference to the financial perspective ceilings:

	Financial Perspective		*Draft Budget*[1]	
	mecu	*£ million*[2]	*mecu*	*£ million*
Commitment appropriations				
1. Agricultural guarantee	35,039	24,417	35,008	24,396
2. Structural operations	18,009	12,550	18,009	12,500
3. Multi-annual programmes	3,115	2,171	2,687	1,872
4. Other policies	5,224	3,640	5,135	3,578
5. Reimbursements and administration	4,205	2,930	3,795	2,645
6. Monetary reserve	1,000	697	1,000	697
Total: Commitment appropriations	66,592	46,406	65,634	45,738
of which:				
compulsory	38,729	26,989	38,548	26,862
non-compulsory	27,863	19,417	27,086	18,875
Total: Payment appropriations[3]	63,241	44,070	62,417	43,496
of which:				
compulsory	38,669	29,947	38,475	26,812
non-compulsory	24,572	17,123	23,942	16,684

[1] Council's second reading draft budget established on 12 November.
[2] The ERM central rate of £1 = 1·435 ecu is used throughout this reply.
[3] There is only a global ceiling for payments.

The European Parliament will consider the draft budget at its plenary in December. The 1992 draft budget is expected to be adopted by the Parliament on 12 December.

Economic Statistics

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to improve the quality of economic statistics.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 17 May 1990 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced steps to improve the quality of economic statistics, particularly on services, companies and the balance of payments. The measures are now leading to more reliable statistics in these areas and will yield additional improvements over the next year. But if we are to have economic statistics which are sufficiently up to date and reliable, we need to build on those measures and to strengthen some of the key components not covered by them. I have therefore asked the Central Statistical Office to undertake a further programme to strengthen the reliability of statistics on retail sales, consumers' expenditure, industrial and service sector output, producer prices, stockbuilding, the balance of payments, companies' finances and the transactions of financial institutions.

Like the first initiative, these measures are designed to make the early estimates more reliable, thus reducing the need for subsequent revisions, and to reduce both discrepancies between the different measures of gross domestic product and the balancing items in the sector accounts. The first improvements in the CSO's statistics resulting from these measures are expected during 1992.

The new measures take account of recommendations from a detailed review of the way balance of payments statistics are collected and compiled. The review, carried out by Mr. Richard Eason, was commissioned as part of the initiative launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in May 1990. A copy of Mr. Eason's report and the CSO action plan in response to his recommendations have been deposited in the Library of the House.

The new measures, like some of those announced in May 1990, involve the wider use of existing statutory powers to secure full response and a more evenly shared burden on businesses. They include transfer to the CSO of some data collection previously undertaken mainly for national accounts purposes by the Bank of England.

In implementing the measures the CSO will consult the appropriate bodies and special efforts will be made to ensure that the burdens on businesses are kept to a minimum. A significant part of the extra burden will fall on businesses that currently have few statistical demands made of them, while some reductions will be made to other surveys.

These measures, combined with the CSO's launch today as an executive agency, demonstrate the

Government's commitment to bringing about a significant and lasting improvement in the quality of the nation's economic statistics and minimising the burden imposed on business by their collection.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made towards establishing the Central Statistical Office as an executive agency.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am pleased to announce that the Central Statistical Office became an executive agency today. Copies of the framework document are being placed in the Library of the House. This sets out the functions and objectives of the CSO, defines clearly the basis of accountability and the division of responsibilities between the director of the CSO and Ministers, and sets out the CSO's commitment to minimising the burden imposed on business by the collection of economic statistics. It also restates the arrangements to ensure the integrity and validity of United Kingdom official statistics.

I have set challenging targets for the agency focusing in particular on the need, both within government and outside, for reliable and timely macro-economic statistics. Since the establishment of the enlarged CSO as a separate department in July 1989, significant progress has been made in improving the quality of these statistics. Agency status will give added impetus to this process.

Sir Jack Hibbert, the director of the CSO and head of the Government statistical service since 1985, will be the agency's first chief executive until his retirement at the end of February 1992. A successor to Sir Jack is currently being recruited through open competition.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to decentralise civil service offices to the south-west of England.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* Since 1988, Departments have decided to relocate or locate around 5,000 civil service posts to the south-west region. These include around 3,000 Ministry of Defence procurement executive's land, air and sea systems controllerates posts which will move to Bristol and Bath in 1994-95, and 500 Department of Social Security Child Support Agency posts due to move to Plymouth in 1993.

Duty-free Goods

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue lost in granting duty-free status facilities for people travelling to and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he calculates will be the loss of revenue to the Treasury of the proposals to extend for a further 15 years the duty-free concession currently available at United Kingdom ports and airports.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answers 7 and 8 November 1991]:* It is very difficult to provide an estimate because there is no information available on the amount of expenditure on duty-free goods purchased abroad by travellers entering the United Kingdom.

A certain amount of rather dated information is available from independent surveys by the Economist Intelligence Unit and the Netherlands Economic Institute on purchases of duty-free goods by travellers leaving the United Kingdom. Using that data, it is estimated very roughly that the loss of revenue to the United Kingdom from duty-free purchases by travellers entering the United Kingdom from the EC may be between £25 million and £50 million a year.

Inland Revenue (Structure Reviews)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will identify the number and designation of jobs which he expects to be lost following the structure reviews within the Inland Revenue department; what consultation has taken place with the appropriate trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The team reviewing the Inland revenue's organisation and structure has yet to report. The review team is consulting a wide range of staff within the Department, has invited representations from the appropriate trade unions and has had discussions with trade union representatives.

Inland Revenue

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the details of the timetable he expects to implement in respect of converting Inland Revenue departments to agency status.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 7 February 1991—*Official Report*, c. 205-6—a wide-ranging action plan, prepared by the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, to introduce changes by April 1992 which would enable the Department to operate fully on "next steps" lines and improve its service to the public. This action plan is being implemented on schedule.

The valuation offices for England and Wales and for Scotland were launched as a single Valuation Office Agency within the Inland Revenue on 30 September. Copies of the agency's framework document have been placed in the Library. The agency's objectives and targets for 1991-92, as agreed by Ministers for the valuation offices at the start of the year, are reproduced in the table.

For the rest of the department, as already announced 33 executive offices are being set up within the Inland Revenue to deal with the work of assessing and collecting the taxes and duties for which it is responsible, and for support services. The head of each office will have significant delegated responsibilities for managing the people and the resources in the office and will be personally accountable for its performance. All 33 executive offices will be set up by April 1992. Framework documents setting out their responsibilities and delegated authorities, and describing their accounting and financial systems and performance measures, will be published at that time.

The action plan also noted that the future organisation of the Inland Revenue's information technology division was under consideration. It has now been decided that the division will also become an Inland Revenue executive office in April 1992. As with the other 33 executive offices, a framework document will set out the authorities to be delegated to the director of technology and the enhanced responsibilities and accountability the director will have

for providing the best quality of service and value for money. The question of an agency for IT services will be reconsidered in 1994, in the light of the department's IT needs at the time and its experience of operating on "next steps" lines.

These changes will mean that over 95 per cent. of the Inland Revenue's staff will be working in the Valuation Office Agency or one of the 34 executive offices by April 1992.

The "next steps" initiative is making good progress in the Inland Revenue and I am confident that it will enable the department to improve its efficiency and quality of service in the interest both of taxpayers and the staff of the department.

Valuation Office Agency: 1991-92 objectives and targets

The Valuation Office Agency's objectives and targets for the current year, as agreed by Ministers and published in the Inland Revenue's operating plan, include financial, efficiency, effectiveness and quality elements. They are:

—to clear 834,300 cases relating to rating work, valuations for Inland Revenue taxes and other work.

—to maintain gross expenditure within a ceiling of £125 million (excluding superannuation and capital) and to match the forecast of £126·5 million receipts from charges.

—to reduce the number of local offices from 124 to 120

—to achieve the improvements in productivity and efficiency targeted below.

Detailed targets:

	1991-92 target	*1990-91 actual*
Valuer productivity (weighted work outputs per valuer)	324	312
Overall local office productivity (weighted outputs per staff year)	121	119
Unit costs (full cost, constant 1990-91 prices)		
—Rating work £	185	229
—Revenue work £	154	153
—Other work £	138	137
Clearance of rating work on 1990 rating list: pre-October 1990 appeals outstanding at year end	362,000	623,000
Timeliness (per cent. of work completed to external and internal time limits)	82	80
Valuations accurancy (per cent. valuations settled within ± 10 per cent. of initial valuation when facts settled)	80	78·8

Targets for work in connection with the proposed council tax will be set in due course.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the organisation and structure reviews within the Inland Revenue department.

Mr. Maude: *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* A review of the Inland Revenue's organisation and structure was commissioned in April 1991 as part of the department's response to the "next steps" programme.

The review is being undertaken by a team of Inland Revenue officials and consultants from Andersen Consulting and Kinsley Lord with experience of other large organisations in the public and private sectors. They will be reporting to the board by the end of December.

Schools Inspectorate

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the inquiry led by his Department into Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* There has been no Treasury-led inquiry into the inspectorate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorist Murders

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of persons convicted of terrorist murder in each of the last five years indicating how many were actual triggermen or bombers and how many were lookouts, drivers or other accessories to the persons who directly executed the murder.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of persons convicted of the scheduled offence of murder in each of the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1986	24
1987	10
1988	12
1989	11
1990	8

I regret that information on the extent of each individual's involvement in the murder for which he-she was convicted is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drinking Water

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many drinking water supplies in Northern Ireland do not meet the EC water directive 1980.

Mr. Needham: In Northern Ireland all persons supplied receive water which complies with the overwhelming majority of the EC drinking water directive—80/778/EEC—standards. There is the potential for non-compliance with the aluminium standard in 39 of the Province's 123 supply zones and a general potential for non-compliance with the iron standard and related turbidity standard in all zones, because of the number of iron mains still in service. A programme of works to ensure full compliance with the directive standards is underway.

Cannabis and Crack

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest quantities of cannabis and crack seized in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am informed by the Chief Constable that the latest significant seizure of cannabis in Northern Ireland was in Belfast on 9 November 1991, when 1·5 kg was seized by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There has been no seizure of crack.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which overseas countries he visited or were visited by the Northern Ireland Minister for Economic Development during the past 12 months for the purpose of seeking investment in Northern Ireland and the creation of more jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Since 1 November 1990, the Secretary of State has visited Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States—twice—Canada, the Republic of Korea, France and Germany. I have visited the United States—twice—Canada, the Republic of Korea, Japan—twice—Indonesia and Germany.

Drink-drive Offences

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been convicted of drink-drive offences in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is:

Persons convicted of drink-driving offences in Northern Ireland[1]

	Number
1986	2,985
1987	2,990
1988	2,750
1989	2,432
1990	2,711

[1] These figures refer to convictions where the drink-drive offence was the primary offence.

The Government are fully committed to continuing their campaign against drinking and driving.

Handicapped People

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional resources he is making available to health boards in Northern Ireland to ensure that the needs of handicapped people are provided for in the community.

Mr. Hanley: Health and social services boards in Northern Ireland have resources of £837 million available to them in 1991-92, an increase of almost £71 million over 1990-91. Within these additional resources, the following sums of money have been earmarked for a number of initiatives which will directly benefit people with a handicap living in the community:

(i) £2·6 million towards part implementation of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, to meet the costs of additional assessments and services;

(ii) £2·847 million to provide community support for long-stay patients discharged from psychiatric and mental handicap hospitals;

(iii) £2·95 million for implementation of "People First" particularly to enable boards to establish inspection units and a complaints procedure and to improve social work training.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to deal with alcohol abuse by youngsters under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Hanley: Alcohol misuse is covered in health education programmes in many schools, and seminars on this topic are organised regularly by the youth service. Coverage in schools will increase when health education becomes a compulsory cross-curricular theme next year. In addition, the licensing laws prohibit the sale or supply of alcohol to persons under 18 and its consumption by such persons in any place other than a private residence.

Owen and James Carragher

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date the firm of Robins AHW Ltd., loss adjusters, was appointed to deal with compensation claim ASC 24337/45 submitted on behalf of Owen and James Carragher.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 15 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *673*.

Paramilitary Organisations

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of terrorist incidents there have been since 1970; and which paramilitary organisations have either claimed responsibility for them or have been attributed responsibility.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 November 1991]:* It is not known precisely how many terrorist incidents there have been since 1970, nor is it always known which paramilitary organisation was responsible. I refer the hon. Member to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's annual reports, which gave details of some of the information requested.

Terrorism Risks

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what facilities and resources are made available to both elected representatives and other public figures at risk from terrorist organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 November 1991]:* I do not consider it appropriate to disclose information about security arrangements for individuals.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been convicted of scheduled offences since 1970; and what were their paramilitary affiliations at the time of conviction.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 November 1991]:* Statistics on convictions for scheduled offences were not recorded prior to 1975. From that year until the end of September 1991, a total of 11,095 people were convicted of scheduled offences. Information on their paramilitary affiliations is not available.

Terrorism

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the security forces have been killed by terrorists since 1969; how many were members of the armed forces including the Ulster Defence Regiment; how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve; and if will give figures for those in the two categories who have been wounded.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* The following table details the number of members of the security forces who have died or who have been injured as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland since 1969:

	1969 to 31 October 1991	
	Deaths	*Injuries*
Regular Army	432	4,669
UDR	195	439
RUC	187	6,855
RUC Reserve	97	—

[1] Statistics on injuries of RUC and RUC Reserve officers are not recorded separately.

DEFENCE

Soviet Union (Military Threat)

5. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's current assessment of the military threat from the Soviet Union.

Mr. Tom King: It is clear that the Soviet Union as we have known it no longer exists. Much of the old Soviet system has effectively collapsed and power is increasingly transferring to the republics. The most recent decision, if sustained, by Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan, that the Soviet Union is no longer authorised to represent their economic interests, will have the most profound economic effects and will further complicate the question of paying for their armed forces. At the same time, if the present forces are split up between the republics, Russia alone would still have conventional forces larger than any other European state, and would remain a nulcear superpower. NATO's new strategic concept agreed at the Rome summit two weeks ago takes prudent account of these continuing capabilities.

Territorial Army

12. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he has in mind for the Territorial Army of the future.

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement setting forth the rationale for the proposed reduction of the Territorial Army units in Northern Ireland, particularly the RAYC and artillery units.

23. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is in a position to announce the future shape of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Tom King: As I have made clear on several occasions the reserves, of which the Territorial Army is an integral part, will continue to make a vital contribution to our defence effort.

In the future, the TA will provide a wide range of capabilities, including participation in the ACE rapid reaction corps and in military home defence. I hope to make further announcements on the way ahead for the TA before the end of the year.

27. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the future role, strength and composition of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne). I envisage that the long-term future strength of the Territorial Army will settle at between 60,000 and 65,000.

European Fighter Aircraft

16. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans for Tornado updates and the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: On Tornado, work is currently proceeding on the development and production planning phases of a mid-life update for the IDS aircraft, with a planned deployment date of the mid-1990s.

On European fighter aircraft, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 15 October.

Trident

19. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the first Trident missile submarine to be effectively in service.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to make public the exact date upon which Royal Navy warships become operational, but I can tell my hon. Friend that Trident remains on course to enter service from the mid-1990s onwards.

NATO

20. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any further plans to initiate changes to the remit of NATO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to the House on 12 November. The NATO summit meeting in Rome on 7 and 8 November completed the fundamental review of NATO strategy put in hand at the London summit in July 1990. The Government welcome the success of this review which has adapted NATO's role to the changed political circumstances in the new Europe.

European Defence Co-operation

22. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Secretary-General of the Western European Union to discuss the joint British-Italian proposals for European defence co-operation.

Mr. Tom King: I attended a meeting of the WEU Ministerial Council in Bonn yesterday, at which a range of issues concerning the future role of the WEU were discussed.

Submarines

24. **Sir Patrick Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what approaches have been made to potential overseas buyers with a view to the disposal of the conventional submarine fleet.

Mr. Alan Clark: Whenever naval vessels are to be disposed of, an investigation is made of possible overseas interest in purchase. Details of approaches to particular countries are matters of confidence between Governments.

Experimental Ranges

25. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department intends to take to ensure that proof and experimental ranges are more environmentally aware.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In line with our policy to increase environmental awareness within the Ministry of Defence, focal points have been established at the headquarters of

the proof and experimental establishments and at all ranges under is control, to ensure that such issues are accorded due attention.

South-east Asia (Personnel Training)

26. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which countries in south-east Asia have in the past 12 months sent personnel to the United Kingdom for training at MoD establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the 12 months to 1 November 1991 the following countries in south-east Asia have sent personnel to the United Kingdom for training at MoD establishments:

Brunei
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Malaysia
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand

"Options for Change"

28. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the "Options for Change" implications for MoD and related employment in south Dorset.

Mr. Alan Clark: Decisions taken to date on "Options for Change" are likely to involve relatively little change to defence-related employment in south Dorset. Other decisions remain to be taken and full consideration will be given to employment aspects where appropriate. Employment in the Defence industry is a matter for the companies concerned.

Nuclear Test Veterans

29. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has recently received from the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association on compensation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received no recent representations from the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association on compensation.

Senior Officers (Newspaper Interviews)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answers of 14 November, *Official Report*, columns *667-68*, relating to HMS Vanguard and Admiral Sir Julian Oswald's interview with *The Times* of 29 October 1991, if he will make it his practice to give in reply to parliamentary questions any information which may properly be given by senior serving officers and officials in interviews with newspapers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is the practice of the Ministry of Defence to give appropriate information in response to questions asked by hon. Members, taking account of security and confidentiality constraints.

Musgrove Park Hospital (Bombing)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there was a breach of Army security at the military wing of the Musgrove Park hospital on Saturday 2 November; and if he will make a statement on security at hospitals in Northern Ireland for army personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The military wing of Musgrove Park hospital is not a military base but part of a national health service hospital. The terrorists who perpetrated this disgusting attack deliberately chose to carry a bomb through a civilian wing of the hospital and place it adjacent to the military wing. Appropriate security arrangements are taken to protect service personnel but, regrettably, total security cannot be achieved.

Guards Regiments

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many horses and troops will be available compared to the current position if his proposals to amalgamate the Blues and Royals and Life Guards are implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Household Cavalry mounted regiment will consist, as at present, of two mounted squadrons, one from the Life Guards and one from the Blues and Royals, as well as a joint headquarters squadron. Each regiment will also contribute two squadrons to the Household Cavalry reconnaissance regiment. This regiment, which will be one of the two regular reconnaissance regiments, will also have a joint headquarters squadron.

Training Exercises (Deaths)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the criteria for establishing a board of inquiry for accidents to service personnel during training; and if such inquiries are set up in every case of death or serious disablement;

(2) if he will appoint a military ombudsman with responsibility for investigating complaints of Ministry of Defence secrecy from families of service personnel who die on training exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The rules governing the convening and conduct of boards of inquiry are contained in Queen's regulations for the three services. While it is not mandatory to convene a formal board of inquiry in every case, all deaths or serious accidents in service are subject to an internal investigation either by a formal service inquiry or by the service police. We have no plans to appoint a military ombudsman.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in how many cases of death of service personnel during training in each of the past five years have *(a)* families requested a full report of the board of inquiry and *(b)* his Ministry have not complied with this request;

(2) how many complaints have been received in the last five years from the families of service personnel, who died during training, about inadequate information concerning the deaths.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will issue new policy guidelines to commanding officers requiring them to provide maximum information with the minimum of delay to families of service personnel who die during training exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The services have detailed regulations, governing the action to be taken in the event of injury or death to service personnel.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have *(a)* died and *(b)* been injured during training in each of the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of deaths and injuries attributable to training or exercises in the three services in each of the last five years is set out in the table.

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Deaths	19	14	15	22	7
Injuries	1,219	1,131	1,140	896	779

Notes:

1. The figures for injuries relate to episodes of bedded sickness of 48 hours or more.
2. The figures include sports injuries sustained by personnel while specifically training or on exercises.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what authority his Ministry declines to disclose to families details of the deaths of service personnel during peacetime training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has always provided details of the deaths of service personnel killed during training in response to a request from the bereaved family. This information takes the form of a specially prepared statement giving an accurate and objective summary of the service investigation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that families of service personnel who die on training exercises are provided on request with full medical records of a deceased person, including the autopsy report.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Requests for the release of medical records will be considered on their merits in accordance with the Access to Health Records Act 1990.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is given to commanding officers regarding providing information to the families of service personnel who die in training exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Procedures for the notification and assistance of next-of-kin on the death of service personnel are laid down in the regulations of each service.

Unoccupied Homes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence homes are currently unoccupied; and what percentage they are of the total stock.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, 9,966 Ministry of Defence owned houses and flats were vacant. Of these 9,834 were service married quarters and 132 Ministry of Defence civilian houses, representing 13·4 per cent. and 9·5 per cent. of the stock respectively. Many of these properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal.

In addition, some 1,700 dwellings were in the process of being sold.

Regiments

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the assessment he has made on the number of service and ancillary redundancies that will result from an amalgamation of the Staffordshire Regiment and the Cheshire Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Redundancies will be spread across the Army, and will not be concentrated in Regiments that are due to be amalgamated. Until the applications for redundancy have been assessed it is not possible to provide the detail requested.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he decided not to consult or warn the colonel of the Staffordshire Regiment of the likelihood of amalgamation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All regimental colonels were invited to express their views about how the reductions were to be achieved, but none were told of the Army Board's decisions before the day of the announcement.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the assessment he has made of the extra burden on local authority housing provision in Staffordshire and the west midlands resulting from the service job losses created by an amalgamation of the Staffordshire Regiment and the Cheshire Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not able to make such an assessment. Redundancies will be spread across the Army and not confined to those units which are to be amalgamated or disbanded. It is not possible to state at this time how many members of the Staffordshire Regiment or the Cheshire Regiment will be made redundant. Nor do we have any information on the proportion of those made redundant who will wish to settle in Staffordshire and the west midlands and who will be seeking local authority housing. We believe that the majority will be in a position to make other arrangements for their housing.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the inquiry to be carried out into the safety and security of Britain's nuclear weapons led by his Department's chief scientific adviser will address issues identified by the Drell report to the United States Congress in December 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: The terms of reference of the group are:

"To review, in the light of any relevant aspects of the report of the Drell panel in the United States, the safety of the present and prospective UK nuclear armoury."

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all transportation of United Kingdom nuclear weapons will be stopped pending the outcome of his Department's inquiry into the safety and security of British nuclear weapons in the light of the Drell report to the United States Congress in December 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the inquiry into the safety and security of British nuclear weapons will use the same computer modelling techniques as those employed on United States weapons for the Drell report to the United States Congress.

Mr. Alan Clark: The working group is free to conduct the review as it sees fit.

Gulf War

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the total number of civilian deaths caused by bombing during the Gulf war in Iraq, Kuwait and Israel, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no authoritative information on civilian casualties sustained in Iraq or Kuwait during the coalition bombing campaign. In the middle of February, an Israeli Minister said that 13 people had died during Iraqi Scud missile attacks and 1,305 were injured.

Greek Campaign (Commemorative Medal)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his counterpart in the Greek Government to discuss the issue of a commemorative medal for participants in the Greek campaign.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Secretary of State maintains regular contact with his NATO colleagues on issues of mutual interest.

Defence Industry (Job Losses)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on plans to promote alternative jobs to offset losses in the defence industry in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The promotion, creation and sustenance of jobs are matters for industry.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 November 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Jasbir Singh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Department of Public Prosecutions plans to institute any prosecutions arising out of the unlawful killing of Jasbir Singh, following the inquest held by the Bradford coroner.

The Attorney-General: On 1 November 1991 the West Yorkshire police submitted a report which is being considered at CPS headquarters.

Private Office Staff

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what are the numbers of staff he has in his private office; and what was the equivalent number in 1981.

The Attorney-General: Three officials staff the private office serving both myself and the Solicitor-General. The private office was set up in September 1989. Previously each Law Officer was served by a senior personal secretary only.

County Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what is the income received in fees for each county court in England and Wales.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. There are some 275 county courts in England and Wales and in 1990-91 the total income received in county court fees was £134,852,000.

Immigration Tribunal

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many times he has visited the offices of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal since taking office.

The Attorney-General: I have not visited the offices of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Sodigar Hussain

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the appeal by Mr. Sodigar Hussain—TH/4303/90—was heard in Leeds; when Mr. Hussain or his representatives were informed of the outcome; what is the current position of this appeal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The appeal of Mr. Sodigar Hussain (TH/4303/90) was heard by the adjudicator at Leeds on 21 August 1991. On 4 October 1991 the adjudicator's determination, dismissing the appeal, was dispatched to the parties' representatives in this country, and on 22 October 1991 Mr. Hussain's representatives lodged an application for leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal against the adjudicator's determination. The current position is that the president of the IAT has adjourned consideration of the application until 12 December 1991, to allow Mr. Hussain's representatives to submit grounds of appeal, if they so wish.

It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the decision of the adjudicator to dismiss the appeal or that of the President of the IAT to adjourn consideration of the application for leave to appeal until 12 December 1991 as they are both judicial decisions.

TRANSPORT

Cardiff Airport

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many international flights arrive from overseas destinations each week into Cardiff airport; how many flights per week arrive from Florida; and how many flights a week arrive from Amsterdam.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the 1991 summer season, there were about 88 international flights each week into Cardiff airport, of which 45 were scheduled services and 43 were charter services. Of the total number, one flight was from Florida (charter) and 18 were from Amsterdam (scheduled).

For the 1991-92 winter season there will be about 75 international flights into Cardiff airport, of which 57 will be scheduled services and 18 will be charter services. Of the total, none will be from Florida and 19 scheduled flights from Amsterdam.

Merchant Navy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish his review on the strategic role of the Merchant Navy.

Mr. McLoughlin: A statement will be made on the availability of British flag shipping for defence purposes as soon as possible.

Street Lighting

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will commit funds to local authorities to improve street lighting in high crime areas.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities already have the freedom to commit funds to the improvement of street lighting.

Margaret and William II

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the investigation into the loss of the Newlyn fishing vessel, Margaret and William II.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Marine Accident Investigation Branch inquiry into this accident is complete and the inspector who carried out the investigation has submitted his findings and recommendations to the chief inspector of marine accidents. A report on the accident will be published.

White Strobe Lights

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many structures in *(a)* the Solent area and *(b)* the United Kingdom are going to be fitted with the new white strobe lights under the International Civil Aviation Organisation requirement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The application of the International Civil Aviation Organisation requirements for the lighting of aeronautical obstructions, is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation within the United Kingdom. I have drawn the hon. Member's question to the attention of the Civil Aviation Authority and have asked it to write to him direct.

War (Shipping Requirements)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce what the shipping requirements in times of conflict should be.

Mr. McLoughlin: Shipping requirements in times of conflict will depend on the type of conflict. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is considering the military requirements in the light of the NATO Heads of State and Governments' recent agreement in Rome.

Blind and Partially Sighted People.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *429*, if he has now received a copy of the report "Blind and Partially Sighted Adults in Britain—The RNIB Needs Survey"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I congratulate the RNIB on this comprehensive report. It will be very helpful to the Department of Transport in its continuing programme of work to improve facilities both in public transport and in the pedestrian environment for blind and partially sighted people.

ENVIRONMENT

Inland Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to alter *(a)* by statute or *(b)* in any other way, the membership or function of the Inland Waterways Amenity advisory committee.

Mr. Heseltine: We are currently considering the structure and role of the Council in the light of the citizens charter and other relevant matters in consultation with its chairman and with the chairman of the British Waterways Board. The terms of existing members expire at the end of 1991 and I am consulting both chairmen on future appointments.

House Building

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice has been given by regional controllers to local authorities concerning the treatment of funding required for new build projects, in negotiations on the level of housing investment programmes for the next financial year.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's housing regional controllers remind local authorities during annual discussions on housing investment programmes of the Government's policy that they should fulfil in the main an enabling role in their area, and should concentrate their efforts on the renovation of their own stock. Scarce resources should be directed to where they will be best employed or where best value for money may be obtained, for example by taking advantage of private finance through sponsoring housing associations' developments.

Planning Appeals

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals have been lodged with his Department in each year since 1985 against refusal by a planning authority to allow the fitting of security shutters or other external security features on shop premises; and what percentage of these appeals were successful.

Mr. Yeo: The information held by the Department about planning appeals makes it possible to identify appeals affecting shop fronts, but not those concerned specifically with the security of shops.

Hedegerows

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about his Department's proposals to introduce grants for hedgerow maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Following announcement of our proposals in July, the Department has received comments from a range of interested parties, including local authorities, landowning and farming bodies, and environmental groups. Our intention to provide new incentives for hedgerow management has been broadly welcomed and we are discussing with the Countryside Commission and others the detailed scope and terms of the proposed scheme. We shall be making a further statement in due course.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce grants for hedgerow maintenance.

Mr. Baldry: We hope to make our proposed new incentives for hedgerow management available next year.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *395-96*, when his discussions with the Countryside Commission and others on the proposed incentive scheme will be completed; and when the proposals will be implemented.

Mr. Baldry: Our discussions on a scheme to provide new incentives for hedgerow management are making good progress, and we shall make a further statement as soon as possible. We plan to establish the proposed scheme in the coming year.

Retailers (Security)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quality standards are required for security features such as shutters, grilles and glass fitted in

commercial or retail premises in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on comparable standards prevailing in other EC countries.

Mr. Yeo: There are no statutory requirements expressly requiring or applying to the fitting of security features in commercial or retail premises in the United Kingdom.

Voluntary guidance relating to the security of buildings against crime is contained in British standard 8220. Part 2 applies to offices and shops and part 3 applies to warehouses and distribution units.

The Department does not keep information on the technical standards and practices applying to security features in commercial and retail premises in other member states. However, information on technical standards is available from BSI's technical help for exporters service based at Milton Keynes. The telephone number is 0908 220022.

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made since March 1991 on assisting Homeless Emergency for London People to get blankets from Government stocks.

Sir George Young: The Government are providing grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to over 80 voluntary organisations in England for practical projects to prevent and relieve homelessness. Homeless Emergency for London People, whose initiative on behalf of the homeless I welcome, has not asked my Department for direct assistance since March 1991. HELP was invited to bid for funds in February but no formal application was received from it.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review his policy on enterprise zones following completion of his Department's study by PA-Cambridge Economic Consultants assessing the impact of enterprise zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The final evaluation of enterprise zones by PA-CEC will not be completed until 1995. Our policy remains that the creation of new zones will be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

Water (Consultations)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines govern the consultations on water quality, water use and flood prevention strategies to be incorporated in environmental impact assessments to accompany private and hybrid bills; and if consultations require obligatory reference to the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Yeo: An environmental statement deposited with a new private or hybrid Bill authorising the carrying out of works will, in accordance with Standing Order 27A (Private Business), generally be expected to contain all the information set out in schedule 3 to the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988. This includes the likely effects of the proposed works on the environment by reference to their possible impacts on water. Promoters are advised when preparing their environmental statement to consult those bodies with relevant information in their possession including, where appropriate, the National Rivers Authority.

Flame Retardants

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current state of negotiations within the EC with regard to the Commission proposal 91/7 on the marketing and use of bromine-based flame retardants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The proposal is for an immediate ban on the marketing and use of seven polybrominated biphenyl ethers (PBBEs) with three more (pentabromobiphenyl ether, octabromobiphenyl ether, and decabromobiphenyl ether) banned after five years. The Government's position on this proposal was debated in the House of Commons European Standing Committee A on 17 July 1991. The proposal was last discussed in the EC in a Council working group meeting on 1 October.

There are two major problems with the current proposal. Firstly, due to a technical oversight in the wording, the three substances which the Commission had intended should remain on the market for a further five years will effectively be banned immediately. Secondly, the efficacy and safety of substitute compounds has not been addressed. The United Kingdom is concerned that, prior to a final ban, substitutes are assessed to ensure that they are effective flame retardants and demonstrably safer to man and the environment. A ban should only follow if the efficacy and safety criteria are met.

I understand that the European Parliament Environment Committee has decided to defer consideration of this proposal until a directive on flame retardant materials used in soft furnishings is drafted. This directive will help to inform the debate on the efficacy of substitutes.

Genetically Manipulated Organisms

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the draft regulations on genetically manipulated organisms.

Mr. Baldry: A consultation paper containing draft regulations, "Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): Proposed New Regulations", was published jointly with the Health and Safety Commission on 22 October 1991.

Drinking Water

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the findings of the drinking water inspectorate into the outbreak of cryptosporidia in the Hull area during 1990.

Mr. Baldry: The investigation by the drinking water inspectorate is nearing completion, and an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Severance Payments

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department proposes to take any action to permit the payment of local enhanced severance payments following the judgment in the case of Allsop v. North Tyneside metropolitan borough council.

Mr. Key: I understand that the metropolitan borough of North Tyneside has appealed against the judgment. The matter is therefore sub judice.

Council House Sales

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the capital receipts from council house sales in each district in his Department's eastern region for each of the last five years.

Mr. Yeo: The total discounted values of all sales of houses and flats, based on returns from local authorities, are shown in the table. Actual cash receipts in any year will depend on the extent to which sales were financed by loans from the authorities.

Eastern Region[1]
Discounted value of all sales (£'000)

Town name	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Luton	6,510	9,714	16,503	10,790	n/a
Mid Bedfordshire	4,767	6,031	7,743	3,711	3,198
North Bedfordshire	6,510	n/a	n/a	7,373	65,104
South Bedfordshire	4,486	6,823	8,601	5,465	3,203
Aylesbury Vale	8,415	10,028	11,791	7,090	4,987
Chiltern	3,810	n/a	31,264	0	0
Milton Keynes	1,812	n/a	8,542	5,277	1,782
South Bucks	2,195	3,180	2,931	3,624	37,213
Wycombe	n/a	10,663	11,042	n/a	n/a
Cambridge	6,021	6,536	9,344	n/a	4,002
East Cambridgeshire	2,181	2,744	3,303	1,597	1,092
Fenland	1,528	2,494	3,845	1,585	507
Huntingdonshire	5,446	7,726	9,603	5,531	3,802
Peterborough	n/a	3,740	6,272	n/a	2,056
South Cambridgeshire	4,406	4,718	6,585	4,139	4,112
Basildon	n/a	n/a	7,326	n/a	n/a
Braintree	5,896	8,242	9,136	6,507	2,740
Brentwood	2,125	2,830	3,778	3,229	2,127
Castle Point	1,557	2,050	n/a	n/a	n/a
Chelmsford	3,834	6,521	10,203	8,866	3,509
Colchester	2,375	4,697	8,880	n/a	1,935
Epping Forest	n/a	6,359	6,498	4,793	3,373
Harlow	n/a	n/a	18,346	22,445	9,217
Maldon	1,337	1,713	2,092	1,226	970
Rochford	1,919	2,182	3,888	n/a	831
Southend-on-Sea	3,335	3,082	6,755	n/a	2,424
Tendring	1,843	2,281	3,462	2,791	1,395
Thurrock	6,943	11,418	13,748	11,726	6,418
Uttlesford	2,255	3,528	4,073	1,660	1,261
Broxbourne	6,536	4,632	7,212	3,414	4,947
Dacorum	12,014	15,391	21,420	13,179	7,769
East Hertfordshire	5,433	5,419	8,039	6,188	4,127
Hertsmere	8,546	9,505	11,138	7,537	4,008
North Hertfordshire	4,584	6,310	n/a	7,729	4,774
St. Albans	4,329	5,490	9,026	9,144	8,464
Stevenage	9,516	n/a	16,832	12,735	7,310
Three Rivers	2,645	4,148	6,372	n/a	3,148
Watford	4,459	5,814	8,257	4,537	2,572
Welwyn Hatfield	14,318	18,162	19,878	14,810	7,330
Breckland	3,273	4,140	6,539	4,060	2,069
Broadland	795	n/a	n/a	n/a	25,042
Great Yarmouth	1,247	1,716	2,794	2,348	1,388
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	2,351	3,252	7,049	2,221	1,350
North Norfolk	1,380	1,887	4,140	3,231	1,168
Norwich	4,245	n/a	16,369	10,562	4,619
South Norfolk	2,239	2,782	4,533	2,805	1,672
Babergh	2,282	2,618	4,305	2.016	1,685
Forest Heath	2,318	3,565	3,707	2,444	1,737
Ipswich	3,436	6,073	11,219	5,730	2,336
Mid Suffolk	1,599	2,304	3,607	3,478	1,207
St. Edmundsbury	3,373	5,360	7,173	4,805	1,679
Suffolk Coastal	2,113	3,602	4,900	2,705	2,630
Waveney	1,582	2,720	4,252	1,844	1,668

[1] Figures shown are as reported by individual authorities.
n/a indicates that no data is available.

Oil Pollution (Kuwait)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the International Council for Bird Preservation on the subject of assistance for Kuwait in tackling the problems caused to bird populations by remaining pools of oil.

Mr. Baldry: I had an exchange of correspondence on this matter with the International Council for Bird Preservation in June and July of this year.

Lead

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what standards exist for the presence of lead and derivatives of lead in *(a)* soil and *(b)* air;

(2) what agency is responsible for the implementation of standards on the presence of lead and derivatives of lead in *(a)* soil and *(b)* air; and what guidance he has given to such agencies to report their findings and activities to his Department.

Mr. Baldry: *(a)* The Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 set down a lead in soil standard of 300 milligrams per kilogram of dry matter. This only applies to those agricultural soils which receive sewage sludge. The regulations are enforced by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. *(b)* A maximum concentration of 2 micrograms of lead per cubic metre (expressed as an annual mean concentration) is set down in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 1989 which are enforced by the Secretary of State. Compliance is checked at air quality monitoring stations and results reported to the Secretary of State.

Waste (Burning)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations exist for the control of the burning of chlorine or PVC-based waste; and what agency is responsible for the implementation of such controls.

Mr. Baldry: The control of existing plant burning chlorine or PVC-based waste is presently subject to the following regulations:

The Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988.
The Control of Industrial Air Pollution (Registration of Works) Regulations 1989.

The Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations are enforced by waste disposal authorities. The Control of Industrial Air Pollution Regulations are enforced by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Since 1 April 1991, new incinerator plant for these wastes has been subject to the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, enforced by either HMIP or local authorities depending on the exact nature of the waste and the capacity of the incinerator. Existing incinerators will progressively be brought under these controls.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest are within 100 m of proposed local road routes.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hook Island

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if a reservoir appraisal, as outlined in appendix B of the planning circular 2/85, has been carried out in the case of the proposed Hook island, Poole harbour, development; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the procedure outlined in appendix A of planning circular 2/85 has been invoked in the case of the proposed Hook island, Poole harbour, development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* Appendix B of DOE circular 2/85 explains the three stages of onshore hydrocarbon development: exploration, appraisal and production. Appendix A of DOE circular 2/85 explains the Department of Energy's licensing procedures which apply to all oil and gas development. BP carried out offshore appraisal drilling in Poole bay in 1988-89 following consultations with local interests and the completion of an environmental assessment.

Following successful appraisal drilling to determine the extent of the Wytch Farm oilfield, BP consulted widely on various development concepts. Its preferred option is the construction of an artificial island large enough to accommodate a well site and drilling facilities on which a conventional land-type drilling rig could be operated. Because the island would be in navigable waters, it is necessary for the construction of the island and the works associated with it to have the authority of Parliament. However, the Bill provides that the area of the sea bed on which BP proposes to construct the island will become part of Dorset for planning purposes. This means that, if the Bill is granted consent, no development will take place unless planning approval is obtained from Dorset county council, or the Secretary of State on appeal.

Sea Pollution

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the Public Accounts Committee report on oil and chemical pollution at sea.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The Treasury minute in response to the 40th report by the Public Accounts Committee on oil and chemical pollution at sea is currently being drafted and will be published shortly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which cities are eligible to apply for specific crime prevention projects funding under *(a)* the safer cities programme and *(b)* urban programme schemes; and if he will list those cities in the last 18 months which have made successful bids for specific crime prevention projects.

Mr. John Patten: The 19 areas where the Home Office has established safer cities projects, listed in the table, are eligible for Home Office grants for specific crime prevention schemes. All have received funding in the last 18 months except Derby, Leicester and Middlesbrough, where projects began operation only this autumn.

Fifty-seven designated districts, also listed in the table, are eligible to apply for Department of the Environment funding under the urban programme. Those marked with an asterisk have included crime prevention projects in their programme for 1991-92, the only period for which I understand this information is available.

Safer Cities projects

Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Coventry
Derby
Hartlepool
Hull
Islington
Leicester

Lewisham
Middlesbrough
Nottingham
Rochdale
Salford
Sunderland
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Wirral
Wolverhampton

Urban Programme Local Authorities

[1]Newcastle/Gateshead
[1]Hartlepool
[1]Langbaurgh
[1]Middlesbrough
[1]North Tyneside
[1]South Tyneside
[1]Stockton-on-Tees
[1]Sunderland
[1]Manchester/Salford
[1]Blackburn
[1]Bolton
[1]Burnley
[1]Oldham
[1]Preston
[1]Rochdale
[1]Wigan
Liverpool
Halton
Knowsley
St Helens
Sefton
Wirral
Barnsley
Bradford
Doncaster
Kingston Upon Hull
Leeds
Rotherham
Sheffield
Kirklees
Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Sandwell
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Wrekin
[1]Derby
[1]Leicester
[1]Nottingham
[1]Bristol
[1]Plymouth
[1]Hackney
[1]Islington
[1]Lambeth
[1]Brent
[1]Greenwich
[1]Hammersmith and Fulham
[1]Haringey
[1]Kensington and Chelsea
[1]Lewisham
[1]Newham
[1]Southwark
Tower Hamlets
[1]Wandsworth

[1] Authorities which included crime prevention projects in their 1991-92 programmes.

Kerb Crawling

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of motorists convicted of kerb crawling in the Greater London area from January to October 1991.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not yet available for 1990 and 1991. In England and Wales in 1989 there were 891 males convicted of kerb crawling. Of these 49 were within the Metropolitan police district and none within the City of London police force area.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time which elapses between the date of criminal injury and the payment of compensation in respect of that injury.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board does not record centrally the period between the dates of incident and registration of claim. Nor does it produce an average time for processing applications. However, percentages of cases completed within certain periods of registration are shown in the board's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of incidents recorded per uniformed police officer for the year 1990-91 in *(a)* Weybridge, Surrey and *(b)* Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. John Patten: Figures are not available.

Northumbria Police Authority

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to reply to recent representations from the Northumbria police authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has received a request from Northumbria police authority for a special payment to meet costs arising from the recent disturbances on Tyneside. This is receiving urgent consideration and my right hon. Friend will reply as soon as possible.

Political Asylum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. Daya Pal Singh and his wife (S 672230/2(S)), Mr. Harvinder Pal Singh (S 672231/2 (S)) and Mr. Hari Pal Singh (S 672909/2 (S)), all relatives of Mr. Mohinder Paul Singh Bedi of Hayes, applied for political asylum in the United Kingdom; what is their current status in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

The hon. Member will understand that it has been the practice of successive Governments not to confirm or deny whether an individual has made a claim for political asylum in the United Kingdom.

Police Cells

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment is made of the mental health of people held on remand in police cells in England and Wales when they are remanded.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: Arrangements for caring for prisoners in police cells are for chief officers of police. I understand that the prisoners concerned are normally assessed by a police doctor on reception.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are taken to ensure that prisoners for whom prison cell accommodation is not suitable are given acceptable alternatives.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: The only circumstances under which prison cell accommodation could be considered unsuitable would be on medical grounds. In such cases the inmate would be accommodated in the establishment's health centre or, if necessary, transferred to hospital.

Children and Young Persons Act

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state *(a)* the number of children detained in relation to section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 in each of the past 15 years, *(b)* the average length of detention or imprisonment undertaken by such offenders, *(c)* how many have been released under licence and *(d)* in how many cases licences were revoked; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold *[holding answer 13 November 1991]:* The readily available information on the number of persons sentenced in England and Wales to detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is given in table 1. The lengths of sentence imposed on those sentenced under section 53(2) are shown in table 2.

Further information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information about the number of juveniles received into and detained in prison service establishments under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 are published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales", tables 3.2 and 3.13 of the volume for 1989, Cm 1221, copies of which are in the Library.

The numbers of prisoners released from prison service establishments in England and Wales on licence from detention during Her Majesty's pleasure under section 53(1) or for life under section 53(2), showing the average times served, are given in table 3.

The majority of prisoners discharged from determinate detention under section 53(2) are released on licence before the end of sentence. In 1987, of the 140 detainees released from prison service establishments, about 90 were released on licence; in 1988 the figures were 120 and 100.

The numbers recalled in 1990 from licence after determinate sentences under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 are published in table 5 of the Parole Board's annual report for 1990 (HC 481), a copy of which is in the Library.

Table 1
Persons sentenced under Section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933: 1975-89
England and Wales

Number of persons

	Section 53(1)	*Section 53(2)*	*Total*
1975	6	45	51
1976	7	51	58
1977	10	59	69
1978	9	81	90
1979	26	54	80
1980	19	64	83
1981	16	71	87
1982	31	81	112
1983	16	69	85
1984	22	99	121
1985	18	154	172
1986	16	156	172
1987	19	154	173
1988	22	177	199
[1]1989	15	115	130

[1] Comparisons with prison receptions data suggests there may have been under recording in 1989.

Table 2
Persons sentenced under Section 53(2) Children and Young Persons Act 1933 by length of sentence, 1984-1989
England and Wales

Number of persons

Length of sentence	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*[1]1989*
Up to 4 months	—	—	1	—	—	1
Over 4 months and up to 6 months	—	—	1	1	1	—
Over 6 months and up to 1 year	1	1	2	6	4	3
Over 1 year and up to 18 months	6	9	9	3	4	1
Over 18 months and up to 2 years	23	39	30	36	32	20
Over 2 years and up to 3 years	39	70	71	59	88	66
Over 3 years and up to 4 years	17	20	21	23	25	10
Over 4 years and up to 5 years	5	10	13	14	12	9
Over 5 years and up to 7 years	4	3	3	7	8	1
Over 7 years and up to 10 years	1	1	2	2	2	—
Over 10 years, excluding life	1	—	—	1	—	—
Life	2	1	3	2	1	4
Total	99	154	156	154	177	115

[1] Comparisons with prison receptions data suggests that there may have been under recording in 1989.

Table 3
Prisoners released on licence from Prison Service establishments in England and Wales from detention during Her Majesty's pleasure or for life under Section 53, Children and Young Persons Act 1933: by year of release and average time served, 1976-90

Year	*Number*	*Time served[1] (years)*
1976	8	7·4
1977	3	9·1
1978	8	7·7
1979	4	7·5
1980	5	8·8
1981	6	8·6
1982	6	8·4
1983	9	8·4
1984	4	7·4
1985	8	8·5
1986	9	9·1

Year	Number	Time served[1] (years)
1987	11	11·9
1988	2	9·8
1989	7	10·2
[2]1990	6	13·1

[1] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody, in non-Prison Service establishments or following any subsequent recall.
[2] Provisional Figures.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide an up-to-date list of each television advertising campaign carried out, or to be carried out, by *(a)* the Home Office and *(b)* the Metropolitan police during 1991-92, and of each other publicity campaign costing more than £100,000, giving for each (i) the topic, (ii) the commencement date, (iii) the duration and (iv) the advertising, promotional and public relations companies involved.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[pursuant to his reply, 5 November 1991, c. 34-36]:* The Commissioner has told me that in 1991-92 the Metropolitan police service is funding one television advertising campaign, which is for police recruitment. This is a part of recruitment advertising for the service which, in this period, is the only campaign costing more than £100,000. It is a continuing campaign carried on throughout the year and is being handled by Collett, Dickenson, Pearce and Partners Ltd. and Moxon, Dolphin and Kerby.

THE ARTS

Library Association

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from the Library Association about the views he attributed to the association in his reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 11 November, *Official Report*, column 776.

Mr. Renton: I am glad to have this opportunity of correcting a slip of the tongue in my reply to a supplementary question from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 11 November, *Official Report*, column 776. I referred to the Library Association when I intended to quote the report "Libraries Choice", which said that the key issues facing public library authorities were not necessarily financial but were those of attitude, choice and commitment. I have acknowledged this in a letter to the Library Association and have copied the exchange of correspondence to the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich and for Stoke on Trent, Central.

WALES

Special Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the initiatives he has taken to assist pupils and teachers in special schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to ensure that appropriate provision is made in schools for children with special educational needs. The Welsh Office has issued guidance to LEAs and others on staffing for pupils with special needs and on the procedures associated with the assessment and statementing processes of the Education Act 1981. Further, the Department has made grant available, which is being continued in 1992-93, under the grants for education support and training scheme (GEST), for the in-service training of teachers of pupils who are visually or hearing impaired or who have severe learning difficulties and for the initial training of educational psychologists.

More widely, we are providing support to LEAs under the GEST programme for the implementation of school teacher appraisal schemes. Appraisal will help teachers, including those in special schools, to improve their professional skills and develop their full potential.

Blind and Partially Sighted People

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to assist the blind and the partially sighted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 12 November 1991.

Hearing Impaired People

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to assist those who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Under the provisions of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, social services authorities are to publish their first social care plans by 1 April 1992. These plans, which in Wales are to be prepared jointly with all other relevant authorities and service providers, and representatives of user and carer interests, will include hearing impairment services and set out the way in which authorities intend to assess and meet peoples needs. The Welsh Office has issued guidance to the authorities on the preparation and content of these plans and on assessment and care management.

This has recently been supplemented by the publication of the latest of the Welsh Health Planning Forum's protocols for investment in health services to achieve health gain, which covers the needs of those with physical or sensory disabilities. The Welsh Office is working closely with authorities in the preparation of draft plans to ensure that they address adequately the needs of all client groups.

The Welsh Office is making available £1·6 million in the current financial year to encourage the development of more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and those with physical and/or sensory disabilities. So far, 39 projects have been approved, with more in the pipeline, and a circular inviting applications for schemes beginning in 1992-93 was issued in October. We are also making available £600,000 in 1991-92 to organisations active at an all-Wales level in promoting the interests of the elderly and of those with disabilities. Among these are the Wales Council for the Disabled (£250,000) and the Wales Council for the Deaf (£94,000).

The Children Act, which came into effect from 14 October, lays a general duty on social services authorities to promote the welfare of children who are in need by

providing an appropriate range and level of services. Section 17 of the Act defines children in need so as to include deaf or hearing impaired children. The provision of education for such children is a matter for local education authorities. However, the Welsh Office has made grant available, which is to continue in 1992-93, under the grants for education support and training programme for the in-service training of teachers of the deaf/hearing impaired. Further, the Department has invited bids for grant aid under GEST for the development of a regional centre for the educational needs of those who are deaf and blind. Bids are currently being considered.

Homelessness

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each district council area are *(a)* registered as homeless or *(b)* on the housing waiting list.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: *(a)* People do not register as homeless but present themselves, together with other members of their household, to the housing authority. The numbers of people within households accepted as homeless by local authorities under the Housing Act 1985 in the quarter ended 30 June 1991 are given in the following table:

Persons accepted as homeless: quarter ending 30 June 1991

	Number
Aberconwy	26
Alyn and Deeside	165
Arfon	23
Blaenau Gwent	196
Brecknock	78
Cardiff	1,129
Carmarthen	47
Ceredigion	47
Colwyn	33
Cynon Valley	284
Delyn	191
Dinefwr	79
Dwyfor	24
Glyndwr	30
Islwyn	97
Llanelli	74
Lliw Valley	46
Meirionnydd	79
Merthyr Tydfil	103
Monmouth	83
Montgomeryshire	71
Neath	170
Newport	793
Ogwr	309
Port Talbot	109
Preseli Pembrokeshire	63
Radnorshire	15
Rhondda	86
Rhuddlan	50
Rhymney Valley	95
South Pembrokeshire	60
Swansea	499
Taff-Ely	196
Torfaen	249
Vale of Glamorgan	233
Wrexham Maelor	176
Ynys Mon	31
Wales total	6,039

(b) No information is available centrally.

Home Repossessions

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes have been repossessed by loan or mortgage companies and building societies in each county of Wales during the current year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Only the total numbers of warrants of repossession are available; those relating specifically to mortgages are not collected separately. However, separate data are available on the number of repossession orders made following mortgage actions. The numbers given in the following table relate to totals of orders made through courts within an area and as such do not correspond directly to the number of homes within that area on which orders were made.

Repossession Orders made following Mortgage Actions[1]

	January-September 1991
Clwyd	542
Dyfed	608
Gwent	855
Gwynedd	445
Mid Glamorgan	1,203
Powys	98
South Glamorgan	918
West Glamorgan	719
Wales	5,388

Source: Lord Chancellor's Department.
[1] Figures include suspended orders, whereby the mortgagees are given an opportunity to clear their debts.

Geography

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish an order to introduce a geography short course for key stage 4 in the national curriculum.

Mr. David Hunt: I have published today an order specifying the attainment targets and programmes of study for a short geography course at key stage 4. These documents will come into effect from August 1994.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank Notes

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he last considered the privatisation of the Bank of England printing works at Loughton, Essex; what conclusions were reached; and what is the latest estimate of the proceeds that would accrue from such a privatisation;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek competitive tenders for the production of Bank of England bank notes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: The printing of bank notes is the Bank of England's responsibility. The bank is, however, fully conscious of the need to ensure that bank notes are produced as cheaply as possible, consistent with maintaining the security and integrity of the note issue and it has assured me that it will take whatever steps it considers necessary to achieve that.

BCCI

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the invoicing of fees by Price Waterhouse to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Maples: None.

Bank Regulation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to create a Banking Commission to regulate all banks in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: No.

Income Disposal

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage of gross earnings going in *(a)* income tax, *(b)* national insurance contributions, *(c)* VAT, *(d)* other indirect taxes and *(e)* the poll tax, of (i) a single person, (ii) a married couple both working, and (iii) a married couple with two children, on (1) 50 per cent., (2) 75 per cent., (3) 100 per cent., (4) 150 per cent., (5) 200 per cent., (6) 500 per cent. and (7) 1,000 per cent. of average earnings in each year since 1978-79

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* Figures for 1978-79 to 1987-88 have been placed in the Library of the House, as noted in the *Official Report*, 13 April 1989, column *624*. Figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 were published in the *Official Report*, 5 July 1990, columns *699-702*. Updated figures for 1990-91 and the latest estimates for 1991-92 are given in the tables.

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1990-91 and 1991-92—percentages of gross earnings

	Multiples of average earnings						
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*5*	*10*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
1990-91							
Single people							
Income tax	15·6	18·7	20·3	22·0	26·5	34·6	37·3
NICs	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	1·8	0·9
VAT		4·9	4·9	5·1			
Other indirect		7·4	6·9	6·6			
Total income tax and NICs	22·5	26·3	28·3	28·1	31·1	36·4	38·2
Married, two children							
Income tax	0·8	8·8	12·9	17·0	22·0	32·8	36·4
NICs	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	1·8	0·9
VAT		4·4	4·8	5·4			
Other indirect		8·0	7·1	6·3			
Total income tax and NICs	7·7	16·4	20·9	23·1	26·6	34·6	37·3
Married, both working							
Income tax	0·8	8·9	12·9	16·9	18·9	28·3	34·2
NICs	4·8	6·2	6·9	7·6	7·7	3·7	1·8
VAT		5·1	5·3	5·5			
Other indirect		9·5	8·3	7·2			
Total income tax and NICs	5·6	15·1	19·8	24·5	26·6	32·0	36·0
1991-92							
Single people							
Income tax	15·4	18·6	20·2	21·8	25·8	34·3	37·2
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·8	1·9	1·0
VAT		5·4	5·4	5·6			
Other indirect		7·5	7·0	6·7			
Total income tax and NICs	22·2	26·1	28·1	28·1	30·6	36·2	38·2
Married, two children							
Income tax	0·7	8·8	12·8	16·9	21·4	32·5	36·3
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·8	1·9	1·0
VAT		4·9	5·4	6·0			
Other indirect		8·1	7·2	6·4			
Total income tax and NICs	7·5	16·3	20·7	23·2	26·2	34·4	37·3
Married, both working							
Income tax	0·8	8·9	12·9	16·9	19·0	27·9	33·9
NICs	4·6	6·1	6·8	7·5	7·8	3·8	1·9
VAT		5·7	5·9	6·1			
Other indirect		9·6	8·5	7·3			
Total income tax and NICs	5·4	15·0	19·7	24·4	26·8	31·7	35·8

Notes:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.
2. Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.
3. In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children. (For 1991-92, the child benefit figure is a financial year average).

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are estimated to be £307·00 per week in 1990-91 and £330·80 per week in 1991-92, using the Government Actuary's Department's assumption of 7¾ per cent. growth in whole economy underlying earnings over 1990-91 as published in the 1991 autumn statement.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. They are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

6. It has not been possible to make satisfactory estimates of the burden of the community charge in the absence of sample survey results, which would enable actual payments net of adjustments arising the community charge reduction scheme etc. to be related to earnings.

Bank Loans

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give comparable figures for the proportion of bank loans to industry which are for periods of five years or more, for each OECD country, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* No data are available in the form requested—that is, differentiating loans for terms of more or less than five years. However, data are available for loans for more or less than two years—the standard system of national accounts split short term v. long term—for the countries shown in the table. These are published in OECD Financial Statistics Part 3, Non-Financial Enterprises Financial Statements balance sheets. The figures are for amounts outstanding in the latest year available, as indicated.

Country (currency/unit)	*Year*	*Short-term loans A (up to 2 years)*	*Long-term loans B (more than 2 years)*	*Proportion of long term loans to total loans B/(A+B) Per cent.*
Austria (Sch billion)	1985	83	68	45·0
Belgium (BFr billion)	1988	655	890	57·6
Japan (Yen trillion)	1988	221	173	43·9
Netherlands (Fl billion)	1988	29	42	58·9
Spain (Pta billion)	1989	1,695	4,478	72·5
United Kingdom (£ billion)	1989	20	20	49·8
United States ($ billion)	1989	152	462	75·3
Yugoslavia (D billion)	1984	1,599	2,922	64·6

PRIME MINISTER

Debt Relief

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has any plans to extend the debt relief he announced at the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit to all low income debtor countries.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to extend Trinidad terms beyond the poorest and most indebted countries. There is widespread agreement that these countries have the most pressing problems. It is right, therefore, that our priority should be to address their problems. So far 22 very poor and indebted countries have benefited from the existing Toronto terms debt reduction package—another United Kingdom initiative. Although the precise criteria for eligibility for the Trinidad terms package are still being worked out in practice, those that qualify will enjoy a much more generous treatment than that presently available under Toronto terms.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made in his negotiations in the Council of Ministers in introducing Community-wide measures to control salmonella in poultry units.

Mr. Maclean: We have continued to press for Community-wide controls on salmonella to be introduced as soon as possible. The European Commission has now published proposals for a regulation on the control of salmonella and certain other zoonoses throughout the European Community. This is a significant step forward and will provide a useful framework for discussions.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current policy on slaughtering salmonella-infected egg-laying poultry flocks.

Mr. Maclean: Poultry laying flocks in which the presence of salmonella enteritidis has been confirmed are required to be compulsorily slaughtered with compensation. On 31 October we announced that owners of poultry laying flocks infected with salmonella enteritidis and poultry breeding flocks infected with salmonella enteritidis or salmonella typhimurium would be given the option of sending their eggs for pasteurisation. This option will become available when pasteurisation plants have applied for, and have been granted, approval to process eggs from infected flocks.

Fallen Animals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the numbers of dead farm animals disposed of improperly; and if he will collect details from highways authorities concerning the numbers of farm animal carcasses they collect.

Mr. Maclean: We have received some reports of unburied animals and illegal dumping, but as the Agriculture Select Committee accepted in its recent report, most are anecdotal. However, the state veterinary service continues to monitor the situation very closely in consultation with all interested authorities.

Quarantine

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number of attempts to break Britain's animal quarantine laws during the last two years; what species of animals were involved; and how many confirmed cases of rabies have been identified in animals either in or outside quarantine during that period.

Mr. Maclean: There were 80 prosecutions in 1989 and 1990 for breaches of the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974, as amended. The majority involved dogs and cats. Others related to rodents, primates, rabbits, ferrets, a hedgehog and a margay cat. Since the beginning of 1989, there has been one case of rabies identified in a dog in quarantine.

Battery Cages

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made at the Council of Ministers in respect of the development of new standards of battery cages for laying poultry.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission is reviewing egg production systems, as required by the EC battery hens directive. I understand that its report, with proposals for revised welfare standards, is likely to be submitted to the Council in the second half of 1992. The United Kingdom will be pressing for significant improvements in welfare conditions and for the directive to be extended to non-cage systems.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he is undertaking into cattle disease indistinguishable in symptoms from BSE but not proven as BSE by post-mortem examination.

Mr. Maclean: There are several common diseases of cattle in which the clinical signs are similar to some of the symptoms of BSE, most notably hypomagnesaemia, nervous ketosis, hypocalacemia and listeriosis. A proportion of clinically suspect cases of BSE which do not have the post-mortem changes of the disease is therefore to be expected. Hypersensitivity, agression or recumbency may frequently prevent investigations into alternative causes either because farm staff will be at risk of injury, or because suspects have to be destroyed in order to prevent further suffering. Nevertheless, histopathological studies of the brains of such cattle have been carried out and no new significant neurological diseases have been detected. We will continue to monitor such cases through the epidemic.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table for each county of England and Wales for each month of 1991 to date showing the number of cattle slaughtered as BSE suspect; and how many and what percentage of cases were subsequently confirmed by post-mortem examinations.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is in the table:

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

January 1991

County	*Total slaughtered*	*Number + VE confirmed*	*Percentage + VE confirmed*	*Number pending*
Avon	63	43	72·88	4
Bedfordshire	6	4	66·67	0
Berkshire	11	8	72·73	0
Buckinghamshire	15	15	100·00	0
Cambridgeshire	6	6	100·00	0
Cheshire	77	74	96·10	0
Cleveland	3	2	66·67	0
Clwyd	33	29	96·67	3
Cornwall	159	130	81·76	0
Cumbria	34	31	91·18	0
Derbyshire	35	32	91·43	0
Devon	200	181	90·50	0
Dorset	179	157	87·71	0
Durham	7	4	57·14	0
Dyfed	113	105	92·92	0
Essex	6	5	83·33	0
Mid Glamorgan	2	1	50·00	0
South Glamorgan	5	4	80·00	0
Gloucestershire	73	62	84·93	0
Gwent	13	9	69·23	0
Gwynedd	5	4	80·00	0
Hampshire	64	54	85·71	1
Hereford and Worcester	38	30	78·95	0
Hertfordshire	8	7	87·50	0
Humberside	8	6	75·00	0
Isle of Wight	14	12	85·71	0
Kent	36	34	94·44	0
Lancashire	50	44	88·00	0
Leicestershire	49	46	93·88	0
Lincolnshire	21	21	100·00	0
London	1	1	100·00	0
Manchester	6	6	100·00	0
Norfolk	37	32	88·89	1
Northamptonshire	8	8	100·00	0
Northumberland	7	7	100·00	0
Nottinghamshire	11	10	90·91	0

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
Oxfordshire	18	18	100·00	0
Powys	21	17	80·95	0
Shropshire	47	40	85·11	0
Somerset	290	241	84·56	5
Staffordshire	35	29	82·86	0
Suffolk	37	34	91·89	0
Surrey	14	11	78·57	0
Sussex East	32	28	87·50	0
Sussex West	42	41	97·62	0
West Midlands	2	1	50·00	0
Tyne and Wear	1	0	0·00	0
Warwickshire	19	14	73·68	0
Wiltshire	140	110	78·57	0
Yorkshire North	78	61	78·21	0
Yorkshire South	9	9	100·00	0
Yorkshire West	8	7	87·50	0

Number of uspect BSE animals slaughtered

February 1991

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
Avon	73	42	64·62	8
Bedfordshire	9	9	100·00	0
Berkshire	11	8	72·73	0
Buckinghamshire	16	11	68·75	0
Cambridgeshire	3	3	100·00	0
Cheshire	60	54	90·00	0
Cleveland	1	0	0·00	0
Clwyd	28	20	90·91	3
Cornwall	120	83	69·17	0
Cumbria	43	37	86·05	0
Derbyshire	27	25	92·59	0
Devon	169	148	88·10	0
Dorset	135	114	84·44	0
Durham	9	8	88·89	0
Dyfed	70	62	88·57	0
Essex	4	3	75·00	0
Mid Glamorgan	2	2	100·00	0
South Glamorgan	2	2	100·00	0
Gloucestershire	51	47	92·16	0
Gwent	11	10	90·91	0
Gwynedd	5	3	60·00	0
Hampshire	41	27	65·85	1
Hereford and Worcester	33	31	93·94	0
Hertfordshire	6	5	83·33	0
Humberside	8	6	75·00	0
Isle of Wight	10	10	100·00	0
Kent	23	19	82·61	0
Lancashire	47	41	87·23	0
Leicestershire	34	30	88·24	0
Lincolnshire	9	9	100·00	0
London	4	3	100·00	0
Manchester	5	5	100·00	0
Norfolk	25	16	64·00	1
Northamptonshire	14	13	92·86	0
Northumberland	13	12	92·31	0
Nottinghamshire	5	4	80·00	0
Oxfordshire	32	20	64·52	0
Powys	18	13	72·22	0
Shropshire	34	33	97·06	0
Somerset	200	173	87·37	5
Staffordshire	36	24	66·67	0
Suffolk	16	14	87·50	0
Surrey	6	6	100·00	0
Sussex East	24	18	75·00	0
Sussex West	52	43	82·69	0
West Glamorgan	2	2	100·00	0
West Midlands	1	1	100·00	0
Warwickshire	15	14	93·33	0
Wiltshire	120	101	84·87	0
Yorkshire North	67	56	83·58	0
Yorkshire South	4	4	100·00	0
Yorkshire West	4	4	100·00	0

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

March 1991

County	*Total slaughtered*	*Number + VE confirmed*	*Percentage + VE confirmed*	*Number pending*
Avon	63	47	83·93	7
Bedfordshire	5	5	100·00	0
Berkshire	11	11	100·00	0
Buckinghamshire	16	15	93·75	0
Cambridgeshire	6	6	100·00	0
Cheshire	58	49	84·48	0
Clwyd	32	19	76·00	7
Cornwall	174	141	81·03	0
Cumbria	39	34	87·18	0
Derbyshire	28	26	92·86	0
Devon	249	213	86·23	2
Dorset	170	143	84·12	0
Durham	3	3	100·00	0
Dyfed	96	83	86·46	0
Essex	17	9	64·29	3
Mid Glamorgan	9	9	100·00	0
West Glamorgan	1	1	100·00	0
Gloucestershire	45	36	80·00	0
Gwent	17	15	88·24	0
Gwynedd	4	4	100·00	0
Hampshire	82	72	88·89	1
Hereford and Worcester	32	30	93·75	0
Hertfordshire	7	6	85·71	0
Humberside	5	5	100·00	0
Isle of Wight	12	11	91·67	0
Kent	29	24	82·76	0
Lancashire	71	62	88·57	1
Leicestershire	40	39	97·50	0
Lincolnshire	6	6	100·00	0
London	2	2	100·00	0
Manchester	2	2	100·00	0
Merseyside	2	1	50·00	0
Norfolk	39	35	92·11	1
Northamptonshire	20	14	70·00	0
Northumberland	11	10	90·91	0
Nottinghamshire	15	13	86·67	0
Oxfordshire	26	24	92·31	0
Powys	21	14	66·67	0
Shropshire	39	36	92·31	0
Somerset	246	197	83·12	9
Staffordshire	37	26	70·27	0
Suffolk	18	17	94·44	0
Surrey	22	21	95·45	0
Sussex East	21	17	80·95	0
Sussex West	49	44	89·80	0
Tyne and Wear	1	1	100·00	0
Warwickshire	21	19	90·48	0
Wiltshire	121	86	71·67	1
Yorkshire North	98	86	87·76	0
Yorkshire South	6	5	83·33	0
Yorkshire West	14	13	92·86	0

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

April 1991

County	*Total slaughtered*	*Number + VE confirmed*	*Percentage + VE confirmed*	*Number pending*
Avon	46	36	80·00	1
Bedfordshire	8	7	87·50	0
Berkshire	7	6	85·71	0
Buckinghamshire	21	19	90·48	0
Cambridgeshire	3	1	33·33	0
Cheshire	85	70	83·33	1
Clwyd	35	25	78·13	3
Cornwall	174	144	82·76	0
Cumbria	50	44	88·00	0
Derbyshire	40	36	90·00	0
Devon	239	208	87·03	0
Dorset	185	159	86·41	1
Durham	9	7	77·78	0
Dyfed	118	101	85·59	0
Essex	18	14	82·35	1
Mid Glamorgan	6	5	83·33	0
West Glamorgan	2	1	50·00	0

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
South Glamorgan	9	9	100·00	0
Gloucestershire	65	48	75·00	1
Gwent	13	11	84·62	0
Gwynedd	8	8	100·00	0
Hampshire	105	86	81·90	0
Hereford and Worcester	33	26	81·25	1
Hertfordshire	8	7	87·50	0
Humberside	9	8	88·89	0
Isle of Wight	18	15	83·33	0
Kent	34	31	91·18	0
Lancashire	56	43	76·79	0
Leicestershire	52	48	92·31	0
Lincolnshire	19	17	89·47	0
London	3	3	100·00	0
Manchester	7	3	42·86	0
Norfolk	60	52	86·67	0
Northamptonshire	29	27	93·10	0
Northumberland	7	3	42·86	0
Nottinghamshire	6	6	100·00	0
Oxfordshire	29	24	85·71	1
Powys	22	16	72·73	0
Shropshire	40	36	90·00	0
Somerset	229	178	80·18	7
Staffordshire	38	32	86·49	1
Suffolk	20	17	85·00	0
Surrey	16	15	93·75	0
East Sussex	30	25	83·33	0
West Sussex	52	39	75·00	0
Warwickshire	24	20	83·33	0
Wiltshire	142	102	73·38	3
North Yorkshire	77	62	80·52	0
South Yorkshire	5	5	100·00	0
West Yorkshire	10	9	90·00	0
Cleveland	5	5	100·00	0
West Midlands	1	1	100·00	0

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

May 1991

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
Avon	54	37	72·55	3
Bedfordshire	4	4	100·00	0
Berkshire	13	10	83·33	1
Buckinghamshire	15	13	92·86	1
Cambridgeshire	11	8	72·73	0
Cheshire	70	59	84·29	0
Cleveland	3	3	100·00	0
Clwyd	19	14	82·35	2
Cornwall	147	115	78·23	0
Cumbria	54	51	94·44	0
Derbyshire	37	32	86·49	0
Devon	180	149	83·71	2
Dorset	141	117	84·78	3
Durham	5	4	80·00	0
Dyfed	93	75	80·65	0
Essex	9	7	77·78	0
South Glamorgan	4	4	100·00	0
West Glamorgan	2	1	50·00	0
Gloucestershire	46	37	80·43	0
Gwent	11	9	81·82	0
Gwynedd	3	1	33·33	0
Hampshire	57	48	84·21	0
Hereford and Worcester	28	22	78·57	0
Hertfordshire	7	7	100·00	0
Humberside	8	4	57·14	1
Isle of Wight	10	7	70·00	0
Kent	37	35	97·22	1
Lancashire	46	35	77·78	1
Leicestershire	41	41	100·00	0
Lincolnshire	10	9	90·00	0
Manchester	3	2	66·67	0
Norfolk	35	34	97·14	0
Northamptonshire	20	18	90·00	0
Northumberland	13	12	92·31	0
Nottinghamshire	8	8	100·00	0

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
Oxon	35	29	82·86	0
Powys	29	21	72·41	0
Salop	32	28	87·50	0
Somerset	208	155	78·28	10
Staffordshire	32	30	93·75	0
Suffolk	22	17	85·00	2
Surrey	13	12	92·31	0
Sussex, East	28	23	82·14	0
Sussex, West	30	23	79·31	1
Warwickshire	17	14	82·35	0
Wiltshire	117	90	77·59	1
Yorkshire, North	68	52	80·00	3
Yorkshire, South	5	5	100·00	0
Yorkshire, West	9	8	88·89	0

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

June 1991

County	Total slaughtered	Number + VE confirmed	Percentage + VE confirmed	Number pending
Avon	44	24	68·57	9
Bedfordshire	8	7	87·50	0
Berkshire	8	8	100.00	0
Buckinghamshire	14	13	92·86	0
Cambridgeshire	5	4	80·00	0
Cheshire	72	62	86·11	0
Cleveland	2	1	50·00	0
Clwyd	37	25	86·21	8
Cornwall	161	129	80·63	1
Cumbria	33	29	87·88	0
Derbyshire	24	22	91·67	0
Devon	172	156	90·70	0
Dorset	125	108	88·52	3
Durham	4	4	100·00	0
Dyfed	95	82	86·32	0
Essex	10	7	87·50	2
South Glamorgan	7	6	85·71	0
West Glamorgan	3	1	33·33	0
Mid Glamorgan	4	3	75·00	0
Gloucestershire	32	28	90·32	1
Gwent	13	11	84·62	0
Gwynedd	4	3	75·00	0
Hampshire	38	33	86·84	0
Hereford and Worcester	28	23	82·14	0
Hertfordshire	6	6	100·00	0
Humberside	10	7	87·50	2
Isle of Wight	10	6	60·00	0
Kent	16	16	100·00	0
Lancashire	39	33	84·62	0
Leicestershire	39	35	94·59	2
Lincolnshire	11	10	100·00	1
Manchester	1	0	0·00	0
Norfolk	26	24	92·31	0
Northamptonshire	15	10	66·67	0
Northumberland	9	6	66·67	0
Nottinghamshire	4	4	100·00	0
Oxfordshire	32	28	87·50	0
Powys	16	12	75·00	0
Shropshire	49	35	71·43	0
Somerset	188	133	76·00	13
Staffordshire	41	33	80·49	0
Suffolk	16	14	87·50	0
Surrey	10	8	88·89	1
Sussex East	20	19	95·00	0
Sussex West	38	34	89·47	0
Warwickshire	17	16	94·12	0
Wiltshire	110	88	80·73	1
Yorkshire North	50	41	85·42	2
Yorkshire South	3	3	100·00	0
Yorkshire West	5	5	100·00	0
London	1	1	100·00	0
Merseyside	2	2	100·00	0

Number of suspect BSE animals slaughtered

July 1991

County	*Total slaughtered*	*Number + VE confirmed*	*Percentage + VE confirmed*	*Number pending*
Avon	42	29	78·38	5
Bedfordshire	3	3	100·00	0
Berkshire	9	7	87·50	1
Buckinghamshire	26	24	96·00	1
Cambridgeshire	5	5	100·00	0
Cheshire	84	71	93·42	8
Cleveland	2	2	100·00	0
Clwyd	43	28	93·33	13
Cornwall	158	133	84·71	1
Cumbria	70	62	88·57	0
Derbyshire	29	27	93·10	0
Devon	187	171	91·44	0
Dorset	126	115	91·27	0
Durham	3	3	100·00	0
Dyfed	106	92	86·79	0
Essex	11	9	100·00	2
South Glamorgan	4	4	100·00	0
Gloucestershire	43	36	85·71	1
Gwent	16	15	93·75	0
Gwynedd	8	6	75·00	0
Hampshire	46	42	95·45	2
Hereford and Worcester	33	31	93·94	0
Hertfordshire	3	2	66·67	0
Humberside	12	12	100·00	0
Isle of Wight	22	8	42·11	3
Kent	34	30	90·91	1
Lancashire	59	48	81·36	0
Leicestershire	48	47	97·92	0
Lincolnshire	22	20	90·91	0
Manchester	1	0	0·00	0
Norfolk	58	49	92·45	5
Northamptonshire	22	18	85·71	1
Northumberland	7	3	50·00	1
Nottinghamshire	11	11	100·00	0
Oxfordshire	28	23	92·00	3
Powys	18	1	61·11	0
Shropshire	43	37	86·05	0
Somerset	215	155	78·68	18
Staffordshire	45	42	93·33	0
Suffolk	14	13	92·86	0
Surrey	9	9	100·00	0
Sussex East	28	24	85·71	0
Sussex West	40	33	82·50	0
Warwickshire	18	17	100·00	1
Wiltshire	85	71	84·52	1
Yorkshire North	77	51	70·83	5
Yorkshire South	8	7	87·50	0
Yorkshire West	17	16	94·12	0
London	1	1	100·00	0
Merseyside	2	1	100·00	1

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the number of occurences of bovine tuberculosis and the numbers of cattle affected and destroyed for each of the last 24 quarters; and if he will make a statement on the evidence linking badgers to such outbreaks.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is given in the following table. None of the cattle destroyed was showing clinical signs of tuberculosis. Every confirmed outbreak is investigated and all other sources of infection are eliminated before the possibility of cross-infection from badgers is assessed. This is based upon badger activity on the breakdown farm together with historical information on badger-related infection in the parish. In the majority of cases where a badger origin has been suspected, infection has been confirmed in badgers killed during MAFF control operations.

Year/Quarter	Number of herds with cattle reacting to tuberculin test	Number of herds with infection confirmed in quarter	Cases attributed to badgers	Number of cattle destroyed having reacted to test	Number of cattle in which infection confirmed by post mortem and/or culture of organism
1985					
Q1	341	34	33	268	138
Q2		16		203	74
Q3		16		142	23
Q4		8		87	16
1986					
Q1	306	24	36	150	40
Q2		23		172	58
Q3		9		109	17
Q4		9		86	16
1987					
Q1	324	24	77	163	92
Q2		16		123	73
Q3		11		243	79
Q4		11		94	53
1988					
Q1	363	38	65	180	78
Q2		20		183	45
Q3		29		155	44
Q4		13		159	81
1989					
Q1	95	37	71	183	102
Q2	142	37		347	162
Q3	109	25		189	43
Q4	106	24		182	48
1990					
Q1	103	23	81	229	97
Q2	149	49		341	142
Q3	105	31		239	83
Q4	112	37		239	75
1991					
Q1	147	39	28	343	146
Total	2,402	605	391	4,809	1,825

Sea Fish Industry Authority

Mr. Franks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make an announcement about the review of the Sea Fish Industry Authority carried out by Fisheries Departments.

Mr. Curry: Officials from Fisheries Departments were asked to carry out a fundamental review of the Sea Fish Industry Authority's future role, and the levy and basis of industry funding on the fisheries industry which would be necessary to support these activities. Their report is being made public and copies placed in the Libraries of the House. Certain other recommendations to the chairman on organisation and staffing will remain confidential.

The report recommends that the SFIA should continue to carry out the majority of its functions but should cease its generic advertising campaign, allowing the levy rate to be reduced to the level which applied before the most recent increase. The report also makes a number of other recommendations about the application of the levy, the constitution of the SFIA board and improvements to efficiency.

Fisheries Ministers have considered the report carefully and accept the broad thrust of its conclusions. We consider that the SFIA, since its creation in 1981, has contributed substantially to the development of the sea fisheries industry. We endorse the review's finding that the research and development and training role of the authority is, in general, strongly supported by the industry. We feel that it should continue to work broadly along existing lines. We agree that various functional and organisational changes should be made to make the SFIA more efficient and cost effective.

We endorse the reviewers' conclusion that the SFIA should terminate its generic advertising campaign, but should continue its more specific marketing and promotional programme. We also agree with the view from the industry that a reduction in the levy would be desirable, as it would help to lighten the industry's financial burden. The saving from ending generic advertising would be £1·3 million out of a current budget of £8·3 million and would enable the levy to be reduced to £7 per tonne. We propose asking the SFIA to take the necessary steps.

We also agree with the recommendations that the levy should not be extended to salmon, trout, canned or bottled fish or applied on an ad valorem basis.

Fisheries Ministers wish all sectors of the industry to be satisfied that their views on the SFIA's plans and budget have been properly considered and that they have

adequate representation on the SFIA board. However, we feel that these issues can be taken into account without the need to amend primary legislation if the SFIA and the industry work together to follow up the report's recommendations for greater industry participation in SFIA advisory committees and in drawing up nominations for the SFIA board. We propose to ask the SFIA to consider adjustments to its organisational structure in the light of these and of the various other recommendations for improving efficiency.

Officials are today writing to organisations with an interest in the SFIA giving them a further opportunity to comment on the action now proposed before final decisions are taken. I have also met the chairman of the authority. To end the period of uncertainty about SFIA's future, our intention is to make a final announcement before the end of this year.

Japanese Cattle

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what arrangements exist between the United Kingdom and Japan covering the imports of Japanese cattle;

(2) whether he will permit the import of Kobe cattle from Japan.

Mr. Maclean: Japan is not on the list of third countries from which member states of the European Community are permitted to import bovine animals and no arrangements exist for the importation of Japanese cattle, including Kobe cattle, into the United Kingdom.

Dioxins and Furans

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests his Ministry has carried out on the levels of dioxins and furans in mothers and babies; and whether the results of these tests have been published.

Mr. Maclean: In 1989 the Department analysed single pooled samples of human milk from both Glasgow and Edinburgh for dioxins and furans as part of a worldwide survey conducted by the WHO regional office for Europe. The results, which were similar to those reported by other western European countries, were published in a scientific paper, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost of offering environmentally sensitive area grants to farmers in each of the national parks in England and Wales using similar take-up percentages as exist in those areas which are of a similar nature and region.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the answer, 13 November 1991]:* I am today announcing my proposals to designate 12 further environmentally sensitive areas. They are:

In 1992:
- Exmoor
- Hampshire Avon
- Lake District
- North Dorset and South Wiltshire Downs
- North West Kent Coast/South Western Peak;

In 1993:
- Blackdown Hills, Devon/Somerset border
- Cotswold Hills
- Dartmoor
- Essex Coast
- Shropshire Hills
- Upper Thames Tributaries.

The new designations will more than treble the amount of farmland within the 10 existing ESAs in England.

Environmentally sensitive areas have proved a tremendous success since they were first introduced in 1987. They help farmers to conserve special habitats, landscapes and features of historic interest. Their contribution to protecting areas of national environmental importance has been acclaimed by farmers and environmentalists alike, and they have paved the way for similar schemes throughout Europe.

We are starting work immediately on six of the new areas so that they can come into operation next summer. The other six areas will open for applications the following year.

The ESA scheme has proved an excellent example of the way in which agricultural and environmental policies can operate in harmony to conserve the best features of our countryside. We have pioneered this approach in the United Kingdom and I am delighted to be able to announce this major extension of the scheme.

ENERGY

Natural Gas

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the latest estimates of natural gas reserves for which production access exists or is planned *(a)* in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea, *(b)* in the Irish sea, *(c)* in the English channel and *(d)* in the western approaches.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department's latest estimates of recoverable gas reserves in the United Kingdom are set out in table 4 of my right hon. Friend's report to Parliament of April this year on the "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom", also known as the Brown Book, which is available in the House of Commons Library. Apart from reserves for Morecambe in the Irish sea and some very small onshore sources, all figures shown for fields in production or under development relate to fields in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of natural gas consumption by all United Kingdom users, by general category, during 1990-91.

Mr. Moynihan: The latest estimate of natural gas consumption by all United Kingdom users, by main category of user, in the period April 1990 to March 1991 is as follows:

	million therms
Fuel producers	
Natural gas producers own use[1]	1,201
Power stations	87
Gas industry[2,3]	*597
Other fuel producers[2]	66
Total fuel producers	1,951
Final consumption[3]	
Iron and steel industry	461

	million therms
Other industry[2]	5,222
Domestic	10,841
Other final users[6]	3,222
Total final consumption	19,746
Total natural gas consumption	21,697

[1] For drilling, production and pumping operations.
[2] Includes methane produced in collieries.
[3] Including losses in distribution.
[4] Figures for calendar year 1990.
[5] Including non-energy use of natural gas. Excluding fuel producers.
[6] Mainly public administration, commerce and agriculture.

Coal Reserves

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of coal reserves for which production access exists or is planned in the United Kingdom in each standard region.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for British Coal, which publishes estimates for total United Kingdom reserves in their annual report. My Department does not keep separate figures.

Oil Consumption

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of oil consumption by all United Kingdom users, by general category, during 1990-91.

Mr. Moynihan: The latest estimate of petroleum consumption by all United Kingdom users, by main category of user, in the period April 1990 to March 1991 is as follows:

	Million tonnes
Fuel producers	
Refineries[1]	6·5
Power stations	6·1
Gas industry	0·1
Total fuel producers	12·7
Final energy consumption (excluding fuel producers)	
Iron and steel industry	0·7
Other industry	7·7
Transport	43·0
Domestic	2·3
Other final users[2]	4·2
Total final energy consumption	58·0
Non-energy use[3]	8·9
Total petroleum consumption[4]	[5]79·6

[1] Fuel used in refineries (including refinery losses).
[2] Mainly public administration, commerce, and agriculture.
[3] Feedstocks for petrochemical plants plus other non-energy uses.
[4] Excluding deliveries to international marine bunkers.
[5] Due to rounding the sum of the constituent items may not equal the totals.

Nuclear Power Stations

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of electricity generated for the grid by nuclear power stations in 1990-91.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The latest estimate for electricity generated, net of electricity used on works, by nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom in 1990-91 is 60,689 GW hours. This figure covers electricity generated by Nuclear Electric, Scottish Nuclear, British Nuclear Fuels and the Atomic Energy Authority.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, by electricity generated and efficiency, nuclear power stations operating in the United Kingdom during 1990-91.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Nuclear power stations operating in the United Kingdom during the financial year 1990-91 are listed in the table:

Nuclear Electric plc	*AEA*	*BNFL plc*	*Scottish Nuclear Ltd.*
Bradwell	Winfrith (from October 1990 no longer supplies the grid)	Calder Hall	Hunterston 'B'
Dungeness 'A'		ChapelCross	Torness
Hinkley Point 'A'			
Oldbury			
Sizewell 'A'			
Trawsfynnyd			
Wylfa	Dounreay		
Dungeness 'B'			
Hartlepool			
Heysham I			
Heysham II			
Hinkley Point 'B'			

Gross electricity supplied to the grid from nuclear power stations in the financial year 1990-91 was 61 Terawatt hours. Information on output and efficiency by station is a commercial matter for the companies.

Oil Reserves

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of oil reserves for which production access exists or is planned *(a)* in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea and *(b)* in the western approaches.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department's latest estimates of recoverable oil reserves in the United Kingdom are set out in table 3 of my right hon. Friend's report to Parliament of April this year on the "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom", also known as the Brown Book, which is available in the House of Commons Library. Apart from a small contribution from onshore sources, the figures shown for fields in production and under development relate entirely to fields in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Coal Consumption

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of coal consumption by all United Kingdom users, by general category, during 1990-91.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested for coal consumption in the United Kingdom in the period April 1990 to March 1991 is as follows:

	million tonnes
Consumption by fuel producers:	
Power stations	81·9
Coke ovens	10·7
Other fuel producers[1]	1·6
Total fuel producers:	94·2
Final consumption (excluding fuel producers):	
Industry	7·4
Domestic	5·2
Other final users[2]	1·2
Total final consumption:	13·8
Total coal consumption:	107·9

[1] Includes consumption by collieries.
[2] Mainly public administration and commerce.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nepal

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the human rights situation in Nepal following the May 1991 general election.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are convinced that the best overall safeguard for human rights in Nepal lies in the country's recent transition to full parliamentary democracy. We welcomed the Government's decision in mid-June to release all prisoners who had been detained under the previous regime for religious activities.

Guyana

20. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts Her Majesty's Government have made to ensure that the forthcoming elections in Guyana are free and fair.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have urged President Hoyte and other Guyanese Ministers to take all possible steps to restore public and international confidence in the electoral system. I recently summoned the Guyanese High Commissioner to express concern at reports of serious inaccuracies in the electoral list and have made the same point to the visiting Guyanese Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the results of his latest meeting with President Hoyte of Guyana.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not met President Hoyte. There have, however, been numerous recent meetings between United Kingdom and Guyanese Ministers, the latest between myself and Guyanese Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Murray, on 18 November. On each occasion, the opportunity has been taken to repeat that we expect free and fair elections in Guyana.

Burma

21. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the question of human rights in Burma.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received numerous representations from members of the public, hon. Members, non-governmental organisations and others.

European Integration

22. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about European integration.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government see the movement towards closer political union in the European Community as an evolving process, but we hope that it will be possible to make a further step forward at the Maastricht European Council, building on the existing wide range of co-operation.

Croatia and Slovenia

23. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what criteria he has denied official British recognition of the democratically elected governments of Croatia and Slovenia; and what were his reasons for urging his European Community counterparts to do likewise.

Mr. Hurd: This question is constantly reviewed. Those Yugoslav republics which want independence will get it. But recognition would not stop the fighting. We have to judge whether recognition of the two republics now would increase the very real danger of civil war in the other republics.

European Frontiers

24. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he intends to take to ensure respect in Europe for existing frontiers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We will continue to uphold the principles and provisions of the Helsinki final act and other CSCE documents which include respect for the territorial integrity of states and the recognition that frontiers can be changed in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and agreement.

Middle East

25. **Sir Richard Luce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position with regard to the middle east conference in Madrid.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east situation.

36. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the middle east peace process.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Madrid conference was an important step towards peace in the middle east. We congratulate the United States Secretary of State on his achievement. We look forward to the early resumption of bilateral talks between the parties and to the launching of broader discussions of regional issues in which we expect to play a part. We shall continue to do all we can to ensure the success of the process.

35. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit the middle east to discuss the prospects for peace in the region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit the middle east.

Sudan

26. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to discuss the situation in the Sudan with leaders in that country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present. Our embassy in Khartoum follows developments in Sudan closely and puts across to the Government our views on the situation there.

Yugoslavia

27. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the situation in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On 8 November, we and our EC partners made clear our condemnation of the use of force by agreeing a number of economic measures against Yugoslavia. We are now working towards a UN Security Council resolution imposing an embargo on the sale of oil to Yugoslavia.

34. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to secure the establishment of structures to provide for the protection of minorities and minority rights before full recognition is given to any of the republics within Yugoslavia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There can be no stability in the region without credible guarantees of minority rights. This must be a major element in any political settlement.

Foreign Affairs Council

28. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he intends to raise at the next Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The provisional agenda for the Foreign Affairs Council on 2-3 December is:

—preparation for European Council;
—Uruguay Round;
—EC/Egypt;
—Yugoslavia.

There will also be a further conclave of Foreign Ministers to discuss political union on 2 December.

United Kingdom Dependent Territories

29. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he is giving to a review of the constitutional position of United Kingdom dependent territories.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Constitutions of dependent territories are periodically reviewed, normally at the request of the elected representatives of the territory. This ad hoc process is appropriate and flexible and fully discharges our international obligations under article 73 of the UN charter. It is implicit in article 73 that the constitutional arrangements must be tailored to the particular circumstances of each territory.

Kashmir

31. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning human rights violations in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received representations from a number of hon. Members, members of the public and other interested organisations.

European Economic Area

32. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent agreement between the European Community and EFTA on a new economic area common to members of each organisation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We warmly welcome the political agreement on the European economic area reached on 21 October. The EEA will extend the EC's single market to the EFTA countries from 1993, creating the world's largest single market. It will be good for Britain, the Community and the wider Europe.

Cambodia

33. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the disappearance of the leadership of the site 8 refugee camp on the Thai/Cambodia border; and what is the view of Her Majesty's Government on the implications for the credibility of the Cambodia settlement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Shortly before the comprehensive political settlement was signed on 23 October, elected administrators at the site 8 camp were summoned to Khmer Rouge headquarters in Cambodia and replaced. At the same time it appears that preparations were also made to return the inhabitants of the camps to Cambodia. At the urgent request of the United Kingdom and others, the United Nations Secretary-General intervened and all the Cambodian parties, including the Khmer Rouge, undertook that there would be no forcible repatriation from the camps that they control. Now that the comprehensive political settlement has been signed, we expect all signatories to meet their obligations under it.

Turkey

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what weight Her Majesty's Government have given, in considering whether to support the application for EC membership from Turkey, to the human rights situation in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government believe that applications for European Community membership should be considered on their merits taking into account all the relevant economic and political criteria, including respect for human rights. The Council, in December 1989,

concluded that the Turkish application was premature, but agreed that measures should be put in place to strengthen the Community's relations with Turkey.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the current situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands; and if he will make a statement about the political, economic and financial position of this colony.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The new Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands are working closely with us to pursue their political and developmental priorities and to ensure the good government of the territory. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will carry forward the discussion when he sees the Chief Minister, the hon. C. Washington Misick, on 28 November.

EC Treaty of Union

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the areas of policy in which the EC and its institutions would seek participation in terms of the draft treaty of union considered by Foreign Ministers on 12 and 13 November; and if he will publish a list of the areas in which EC participation is not sought in terms of the draft.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The latest composite draft treaty texts circulated by the Dutch presidency, which are available in the Library, provide a comprehensive survey of all the areas where it is proposed to amend the existing provisions of the treaty of Rome. They also include the proposals for increasing inter-governmental co-operation within the framework of the Union.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what increases he has made in the United Kingdom's diplomatic representation in eastern European countries over the past year; if he has any plans for further increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Since November 1990 10 additional staff have been posted to eastern European countries, excluding the Soviet Union. We keep our representation in the region under constant review.

Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the admission of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary gave on 16 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), at c. *156*.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held between the British Government and the United States authorities on the recent repatriation of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong to Vietnam and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 12 November 1991, at c. *480*.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees have been accepted into the United Kingdom at the latest date.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Between 1975 and 31 October 1991, 18,032 Vietnamese refugees were resettled in the United Kingdom from places of first asylum in south-east Asia. In addition, a further 4,203 Vietnamese were settled in the United Kingdom under the orderly departure programme.

Lockerbie

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to inform other Governments of the results so far of the Lockerbie investigation; and what steps he is taking to ensure that high-performance plastic explosive is made only under Government authority and incorporates a substantial signature to assist detection.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have briefed a wide range of Governments throughout the world on the issue of warrants resulting from the Lockerbie investigation.

The convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection was signed, subject to ratification, by the United Kingdom, and 40 other states, on 1 March 1991. The convention will require all plastic explosives manufactured by parties to the convention to be "marked" through a chemical additive which will make them detectable by existing equipment. (*Official Report*, 20 March 1991, column *114*).

The Government are now taking steps to enable ratification of the convention.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he now has on the country in which the high-performance plastic explosive used in the Lockerbie outrage was manufactured.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Air Accidents Investigation Branch report No. 2/90 and the report of the fatal accident inquiry relating to the Lockerbie air disaster refer to the positive evidence of a detonating high performance plastic explosive, similar to Semtex, being responsible for the explosive destruction of Pan Am flight 103. We have no evidence linking any one country to the manufacture of the plastic explosive used.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Czechoslovakia and any other country manufacturing Semtex or any high-performance plastic explosive in order to ensure a readily recognisable signature is included in the manufacture to assist detecting devices and sniffer dogs.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom worked closely with the Government of Czechoslovakia in the preparation of the convention on the marking of plastic explosives

for the purpose of detection which was signed, subject to ratification, by the United Kingdom and 40 other states, including all major producers of plastic explosives, on 1 March 1991.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Maltese Government following the findings of the Lockerbie investigation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Maltese authorities co-operated closely throughout the Lockerbie investigation. They have been briefed fully on the findings of the investigation.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the allowances paid to Vietnamese refugees returning voluntarily to Vietnam in order to help them resettle.

Mr. Garel-Jones *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* All Vietnamese migrants who arrived in places of first asylum before 27 September 1991 and who volunteer to return to Vietnam receive US$410 repatriation assistance from UNHCR.

Since it was clear that this payment was acting increasingly as an incentive for clandestine departure, UNHCR announced on 27 September 1991 that for all asylum seekers arriving after that date, the level of cash assistance for voluntary returns would be reduced to US$50.

In addition, the international reintegration assistance programme aims to help all those who return to resume their lives in Vietnam by creating jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises and improving rural infrastructure and health and training facilities.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Government Finance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish an estimate of the total amount of poll tax collected in 1990-91 from direct deductions from benefit in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Miss Widdecombe: An estimated £785,000 in community charge deductions was paid over to the local authority during the financial year 1990-91 by Benefits Agency local offices which cover the Strathclyde area. This figure includes about £37,000 collected from beneficiaries at the Greenock and Port Glasgow social security offices.

A similar estimate for the whole of Scotland could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Health Service Staff (Disablement)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the amount of Department of Social Security disablement benefit received each year by health service staff for back pain or back injury;

(2) what is the amount of Department of Social Security industrial injuries benefit received each year by health service staff for back pain or back injury;

(3) what is the total amount of Department of Social Security disablement benefit received each year by health service staff;

(4) what is the total amount of Department of Social Security industrial injuries benefit received each year by health service staff.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Circulars

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many circulars have been issued by his Department *(a)* to local authorities and *(b)* to other organisations or individuals, since 1 January 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: Eighteen housing benefit and community charge benefit circulars have been issued by the Department to local authorities since 1 January 1991. The other information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the closure programme of resettlement units; what alternatives are in place; and what assessment he has made of the number of people who may be made homeless as a result of these changes.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the closure programme of resettlement units is in the Resettlement Agency annual report, a copy of which is in the Library. No one will be made homeless as a result of the changes. Details of alternative provision is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the membership of the regional review teams set up to produce and evaluate alternatives to resettlement units; and the dates each review team met; and what plans there are for future meetings;

(2) if he will list the membership of the national advisory steering group set up to advise on proposed replacements to resettlement units; the dates it met; and what plans there are for future meetings.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of resettlement units is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Disabled People

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what proportion, of people in receipt of income support/housing benefit *(a)* disability premium and *(b)* severe disability premium, also receive invalidity pension/allowance.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 5 November 1991]:* The number of cases in receipt of income support/housing benefit with disability premium and/or severe disability premium awarded, and in receipt of invalidity pension/allowance in Great Britain in May 1990, are as follows:

		As a percentage of all in receipt of DP or SDP
		Per cent.
With Disability Premium	204,000	42
With Severe Disability Premium	7,000	10

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the real-terms difference between United Kingdom overseas development assistance in calendar year 1989 and calendar year 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: Net official development assistance in 1990 was 12·8 per cent. lower in real terms than in 1989. The 1990 figure was low because a disproportionate amount of planned 1990-91 expenditure fell in the first quarter of 1991. Measured by financial years the aid programme has grown in real terms since 1987-88, and is planned to continue to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to reduce the amount of British aid tied to the purchase of British goods and services; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The level of aid tied to British goods and services is regularly considered in the context of the effective operation of our aid programme. Proposals to untie bilateral aid within the Community are scheduled to be discussed by Ministers at the development council meeting on 28 November. We have always made it clear that we are ready to consider further untying if others are genuinely prepared to reciprocate, and there are satisfactory monitoring and policing arrangements.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to link the quantity of aid given to recipient countries to his assessment of those countries' adoption of good governance.

Mrs. Challker: Individual aid programmes are regularly assessed to ensure appropriate and effective use of resources. We take into account a number of factors which contribute to good government in the country concerned. In June I announced a target of £50 million in new bilateral commitments for direct assistance on good government in the coming year.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government plan to increase United Kingdom aid to developing countries to the United Nations target level of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government accept in principle the United Nations target for aid of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. Future levels of aid will continue to depend, however, on our economic circumstances and on the many other priorities for public expenditure. The Government's public expenditure plans announced in the autumn statement provide for aid to developing countries of £1,831 million in 1992-93, £1,900 million in 1993-94 and £1,980 million in 1994-95. These figures represent an increase, over this year's originally planned figure, of 15 per cent. in cash terms and 3 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of British aid is fully and freely available for worldwide procurement.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1989, the latest year for which figures are available, 33 per cent. of British aid commitments were untied.

Project Appraisal

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the project appraisal guidelines which have replaced the minimum test of development soundness to which he referred in his answer to the hon. Members for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 15 October 1991, *Official Report*, columns *126-27*.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid and trade provision projects are now assessed to ensure that they represent sound investments which are financially viable and technically sound and are likely to bring economic benefits to the recipient country. This assessment includes the following factors.

- the market for the output;
- the best way of supplying the output;
- the rate of return on the project;
- the customer's capability for implementing the project including subsequent operation and maintenance;
- the recipient Government's policies in relevant sectors of the economy;
- the cost burden of the project on the recipient country; and
- the environmental impact.

UN Environment Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been afforded to *(a)* United Kingdom-based non-governmental organisations and *(b)* non-governmental organisations from abroad, by his Department's Overseas Development Administration, to assist their participation in the preparatory committee meetings for the United Nations conference on environment and development in June 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government pay for a representative from UNEP-UK, which is co-ordinating the views of British non-governmental organisations on the UN conference on environment and development, to attend meetings of the preparatory committee. I am considering how we might assist NGOs from developing countries.

Forestry Protection

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made by working group I of the preparatory committee for the United Nations conference on environment and development on forestry protection.

Mrs. Chalker: At its third session in Geneva in August and September, the preparatory committee began preparing a statement of principles on the management and conservation of the world's forests. It is expected that the statement of principles will be finalised at the final session of the preparatory committee in New York in March 1992, and that it will be endorsed by world leaders at the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Guyana

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been given to Guyana in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: Following are the figures:

	£ million
1988	0·6
1989	6.6
1990	15·3

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the threat to the greenheart tree in Guyana.

Mrs. Chalker: No such assessment has been made. Since October 1990 the bilateral aid programme has been financing a three-year research programme by Imperial college which is looking at the major problems concerning the regeneration of greenheart and other commercial timber species.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the Guyanese Timber Company has received in World bank grants.

Mrs. Chalker: The World Bank approved a $10 million loan in October 1978 and a supplementary IDA loan of SDR8·7 million ($8·8 million) in March 1985 to the Government of Guyana for the Upper Demerara forestry project. A state-owned company, Demerara Woods, was set up to manage the project.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what present aid projects exist with Sri Lanka; and if he will list them.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 18 November, column *71*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the costs of the work of the grant-maintained schools section of his Department as a percentage of the overall budget of his Department.

Mr. Eggar: In 1991-92 the work of the grant-maintained schools division will account for around 0·7 per cent. of the Department's gross running costs recurrent budget.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff are employed in the *grant-maintained schools section of his Department.*

Mr. Eggar: There are 43 staff working in the grant-maintained schools division of the Department.

Science Budget

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a full statement of the calculations underlying the transitional arrangements in respect of dual support for science funding summarised in his answer to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), *Official Report*, 7 November, columns *202-04*.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 29 July, transitional arrangements will apply to projects for which grant funding is already in progress at 1 August 1992.

The direct costs element of these projects will continue to be paid under existing arrangements but the research councils will make a contribution to indirect costs at the rate of 40 per cent. of the staff element of direct costs.

The new dual support arrangements will apply in full to all grants starting on or after 1 August 1992; direct costs for these projects will be assessed using the new boundary and these grants will also be subject to a 40 per cent. addition to the staff element to cover indirect costs.

The additions to the science budget for dual support announced on 7 November take account of the expected incidence of additional costs resulting from this phasing arrangement. They take account of the average grant profiles of the research councils; variations in the proportions of direct costs relating to staff; and the expected incidence of additional direct costs for each council. Information on the incidence of additional direct costs is based on the study undertaken jointly by heads of the research councils and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, published in July. Copies of the joint report are available in the Library.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements as to quantum and timing of subscriptions to CERN he has taken into account in determining the changes in the science budget over the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In line with usual practice, the Secretary of State determined the changes in the science budget over the three years 1992-93 and 1994-5 following advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the research councils' latest assessment of their research priorities and consequent spending requirements.

In formulating its advice, the ABRC gives due regard to the research councils' international commitments.

Schools Inspections

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he wil publish his review report on Her Majesty's inspectorate; and whether parents will in future have access to such reports as part of their entitlement to information under the parents charter.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House on 6 June and repeated on 14 November, the review was set up to provide confidential advice to Ministers and would not be published. The parents charter sets out our proposals for ensuring that parents have the best possible information about local schools. Our plans for school inspection will play an important part in the process.

Class Sizes

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate his Department has of the cost of reducing all registration classes to a maximum of 30 pupils.

Mr. Fallon: My Department does not collect data on the size of the classes in which pupils are registered, so no estimate of the cost of reducing them to a maximum of 30 pupils can be made.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many registration classes have more than 30 pupils.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available centrally.

Alzheimers Disease

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what future he envisages for accelerator mass spectrometry research relating to the possible role of aluminium in Alzheimers disease consequent upon the proposed closure of the nuclear structure facility.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Science and Engineering Research Council is currently reviewing future scientific options following the closure of the nuclear structure facility, including for research in the field of accelerator mass spectrometry.

Higher Education

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for improvement in the quality of higher education; and to what extent they involve computer-based learning and video teaching.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government's plans for maintaining and improving the quality of higher education were set out in the higher education White Paper, "Higher Education: A New Framework", (Cm. 1541). They are provided for in the Further and Higher Education Bill now before Parliament. The information systems committee of the Universities Funding Council has launched a number of initiatives on computer-based learning which are contributing to the development of more flexible and effective provision on the lines envisaged in the White Paper. Capital funding for the Universities Funding Council in 1992-93 will be £9 million higher than in 1991-92; this should enable a start to be made on SuperJANET, the upgraded academic computer network proposed by the ISC.

Teachers' Pay Review Body

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the expenses or honoraria which are to be paid to the members of the School Teachers' Pay Review Body.

Mr. Eggar: Under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1991, my right hon. and learned Friend is empowered to pay the chairman, deputy chairman and members of the review body such remuneration and such allowances in respect of expenses properly incurred by them in the performance of their duties as he may determine. The amounts to be paid will be those properly claimed by each member of the review body.

SuperJANET

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the need for SuperJANET; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: We have received a number of representations from the academic and research communities about the proposed SuperJANET network. The spending plans announced in the autumn statement provide for capital funding for the Universities Funding Council in 1992-93 to be £9 million higher than in 1991-92: this should enable a start to be made on SuperJANET.

Further Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *140*, on what basis he has calculated the £25 million to be provided for 1992-93 for the costs of the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council and the removal of further education and sixth-form colleges from local authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The Government intend that, subject to the passage of the Further and Higher Education Bill, funding should be available to assist colleges in preparing for independence from local authority control. The £25 million included in the Government's expenditure plans for 1992-93 has been calculated on the basis that it will allow substantial help to be given to colleges for this purpose and will also cover the costs of establishing the new Further Education Funding Council.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake a review of the resource requirements of those grant-maintained schools which incur additional costs by providing teaching experience for postgraduate students who are following courses of teacher training.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Secretary of State has no plans to undertake a review of the resource requirements of grant-maintained schools for the provision of teaching experience for students on initial teacher training courses.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds are currently available to local education authorities and grant-maintained schools to assist them with the additional costs incurred in providing teaching experience for postgraduate students who are following courses of teacher training.

Mr. Eggar: Funding for students on courses of initial teacher training is directed, through the funding councils, to the teacher training institutions, which are responsible for making arrangements for teaching practice and other school experience for such students.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students each year from courses of teacher training undertake training placements in schools; and how many days on average each student spends each year on such placements.

Mr. Fallon: During the 1991-92 academic year, about 15,000 postgraduate certificate of education students and about 23,000 undergraduate students will be placed at a school as part of their teacher training. Postgraduate certificate of education students spend an average of 18 weeks on school experience and teaching practice during their one-year course. Undergraduate students on four-year courses spend an average of 26 weeks in schools over the whole course, with much of this being concentrated in the final year of the course.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Investors

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the range of impartial professional advice available to investors.

Mr. Redwood: The provision of independent financial advice is one of the matters currently being considered by the Securities and Investments Board in its review of retail regulation.

The Government are keen to see a wide range of suitable independent advice available in the market place through independent financial advisers and others.

Accounting Standards Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward proposals to make the Accounting Standards Board a statutory body.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to change the status of the Accounting Standards Board.

Company Disclosure Requirement

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to monitor compliance with the disclosure requirement of schedule 7 paragraph 9 to the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood: No. My Department will, however, continue to respond to specific complaints about non-compliance with statutory requirements relating to company directors' reports.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide details of the financing of the Financial Reporting Council.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the annual report and accounts of the Financial Reporting Council Ltd. for the year to 31 March 1991, copies of which are available on request from the company.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who carries out the investigations authorised under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood: Investigations under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 as amended are carried out by those persons described in section 447(3), that is, an officer of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or any other competent person.

House of Fraser

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the progress being made by the Takeover Panel in its inquiries into possible breaches of the takeover code in relation to the House of Fraser; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Takeover Panel is not conducting its inquiries on my behalf, and I am therefore not responsible for its progress.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when, in accordance with the undertaking given by his predecessor to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, he expects to report to the House on how all the regulators concerned with the takeover of the House of Fraser have carried out their duties.

Mr. Redwood: Memoranda were submitted to the Trade and Industry Committee in November and December 1990 in respect of action taken by regulators in the House of Fraser case. When further relevant information is provided by regulators, the Committee will be informed.

Guyana

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the results of the Department of Trade and Industry-organised seminar with President Hoyte.

Mr. Lilley: No such seminar has been organised by my Department.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Department of Trade and Industry-sponsored trade delegations have been to Guyana.

Mr. Lilley: Since 1986 there has been one sponsored trade mission to Guyana. This was undertaken by the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group in February 1991.

Information Technology

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many meetings he and his Ministers have had with information technology users and suppliers, and their trade associations, to discuss policy issues and reactions to EC draft directives;

(2) if he will name all the third parties his Department has consulted during the last year on information technology and information technology-related issues.

Mr. Leigh: During the last year, DTI Ministers and officials have had numerous contacts with the suppliers and users of information technology, with their trade associations, and with other interested parties such as NEDO. Such contacts form an integral part of the daily business of my Department and cannot be quantified without disproportionate cost and effort.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last discussed information technology, or information technology-related, issues with other Ministers at the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Leigh: The Commission communication on the electronics and IT industry was discussed by the Industry Council on 29 April 1991, which Lord Hesketh attended, and again discussed by the Industry Council on 18 November. Lord Reay was unable to attend that Council as he was attending the European Space Agency ministerial meeting in Munich. IT was also discussed within the context of Community research and development at the Research Council on 28 October. Lord Reay represented the United Kingdom at that Council.

IT has also been considered in the context of other Councils in recent times, such as the Internal Market Council on 7 November, at which the proposed IMPACT programme concerning the development of the European information market was discussed.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many people in his Department are engaged full time in monitoring developments from the European Commission in Brussels, in the realm of information technology;

(2) how many staff work full time on information technology, and information technology-related, issues in his Department.

Mr. Leigh: My Department employs over 600 staff on information technology, and information technology-related issues. The major concentrations of these personnel are in information technology division, manufacturing technology division, telecommunications and post division and the national physical laboratory, and in respect of my Department's own use of information systems, services and management division.

Of these staff, a number of them are involved with monitoring the European Commission's activities in relation to information technology research and other programmes that relate to information technology, but none is engaged full time in that capacity.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives his Department is planning in order to harmonise European information technology legislation.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is reacting constructively to current European Community initiatives which may affect European information technology legislation.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether there is a central record of reviews and surveys relating to information technology sponsored by his Department;

(2) how many reviews or surveys relating to information technology, excluding those which relate to his Department's internal departmental use of information technology, are being sponsored by his Department; and what topics they cover.

Mr. Leigh: A list of management or computer consultancy contracts awarded by my Department during financial year 1990-91 was published in the *Official Report* on 5 June 1991, columns *241-46*.

Innovation Unit

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the new innovation unit within his Department.

Mr. Leigh: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's recent press notice P/91/544 of 10 October about the launch of the innovation unit.

Spirits and Liqueurs

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what grounds he has decided against extending the requirement to sell gin, rum, vodka and whisky in prescribed quantities to other spirits and liqueurs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Following consultation, I announced on 25 July my decision not to extend the categories of spirits to be sold in prescribed quantities. No members of the public have complained to me about the limited scope of the legislation. Moreover, if the legislation were extended the same instrument design could no longer be used for all spirits subject to prescribed quantities. This might result in the accidental use of the wrong instrument and would place an additional burden on the trade. Some consultees also stated that many non-controlled spirits are sold as after-dinner drinks and tend to compete more with each other than with the four controlled ones.

Inward Investment (Ireland)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the inducements available in the Republic of Ireland for inward industrial investment from overseas and those available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* Information on this subject is contained in "European Regional Incentives" prepared by the European Policies Research Centre, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about firms relocating factories from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland because of lower rates of corporation tax or other inducements.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The hon. Member raised this issue with me when we met recently. I have received no other representations concerning relocation of factories from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland because of lower rates of corporation tax or other inducements. My Department does not routinely collect information on such moves.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on Taiwan's application to become a member of GATT, in the light of Taiwan's treatment of imported Scotch whisky.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The discriminatory tax treatment of Scotch whisky in Taiwan is unsatisfactory. Relations with GATT are a matter of

Community competence and the Community's position on Taiwan's application to accede to GATT is still under consideration. The United Kingdom, of course, takes up the questions important to Scotch whisky with the European Commission and our European partners.

Food Prices

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer the lack of price competition by the large food retailers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for them to carry out a full investigation.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The Director General of Fair Trading continues to keep markets under review, but I understand that at present he has no evidence of price-fixing which would justify a reference of the food retailing sector to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Any evidence of anti-competitive practices should be referred to the director general. Recently there has been evidence of price competition.

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to provide increased financial and other assistance to British footwear manufacturers trying to gain access to the Japanese market.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 12 November, *Official Report*, col *458*.

EMPLOYMENT

Ambrosia Creamery (Accident)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *411*, on the accident at the Ambrosia creamery, Lifton, Devon on 28 November 1990, what consideration was given to the statements taken by the employer from witnesses during the course of their investigation before reaching the conclusion about the possibility of determining responsibility for the damaged guard mechanism.

Mr. Jackson: In coming to a conclusion about the appropriate action to be taken after determination of the extent of responsibility for the damaged guard mechanism, the Health and Safety Executive took full account of the statements taken by the employer from witnesses during the course of the company's own investigation.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *411*, if he will list the people interviewed by the inspector when carrying out the investigation into the accident on 28 November 1990, at the Ambrosia creamery, Lifton, Devon; and what positions in the company they occupied.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested cannot be provided. It is not the policy of the Health and Safety Executive to disclose such information without the knowledge and consent of those individuals concerned.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *411*, what examination the Health and Safety Executive has made of the reason why an interlock switch was originally fitted to the hinged door to ensure that the conveyor was switched off whenever the door was open on the machinery in the accident on 28 November 1990, at the Ambrosia creamery, Lifton, Devon.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive inspector who investigated the accident on 28 November 1990 at Ambrosia creamery questioned the management team about the origins of the machine. He learned that it had been supplied from Germany without guarding at the cup feed point and that management considered that an interlocked guard should be fitted to prevent access to the feed mechanism while the power to the machine was switched on.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *411*, in connection with the accident at the Ambrosia creamery, Lifton, Devon, on 28 November 1990, for what period the interlocking switch which was fitted to the hinged door on the conveyor was out of action; whether the machine was made to operate after the switch was inoperative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information available to the Health and Safety Executive investigation indicated that the door became unhinged during the early shift on 21 November 1990. As a consequence the door interlocking switch had been put out of action to allow the machine to operate without it. HSE established that a temporary repair was made during the same shift to restore operation of the interlock switch but this repair failed at a time and date which has not been possible precisely to ascertain.

Crane Accident, St. Mary's

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *413*, whether the crane driver was interviewed following the accident to a crane at St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly on 13 July 1991; what observations he made; whether the safe load indicator was operating correctly at the time of the accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector who investigated the accident on 13 July 1991 at St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, did not interview the crane driver. HSE therefore has no information concerning his observations.

The inspector found that the warning bell circuit of the safe load indicator was operational at the time of his visit. However he was unable to establish whether the entire system was operational at the time of the incident, because of the damage the crane sustained when it overturned and the loss of part of the jib during the dismantling operation to make the crane safe.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, Official Report, column *413*, concerning the accident at St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, on 13 July 1991, what load it was thought was being lifted by the crane involved; and what was the actual weight lifted in tonnes.

Mr. Jackson: It was thought that the container lifted by the crane involved in the accident at St. Mary's on 13 July weighed 4 tonnes or less. The actual weight of the container lifted was later found to be 4·3 tonnes.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reason the number of inspectors allocated to the research and laboratory services division at the health and safety inspectorate has been set at one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: It is quite common practice in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for inspectors to be given short-term postings to non-inspectorate divisions, partly as development opportunities and partly to promote cross fertilisation of ideas. However, a great many of the professional posts in HSE's research and laboratory services division involve specialised scientific work and do not readily lend themselves to this type of approach. The division is therefore primarily staffed by professional scientific staff.

The non-scientific posts in the division are largely concerned with service delivery, involving administrative/clerical and other support duties, and would not provide the right sort of opportunities for inspectors. Even though there is little scope for postings, however, scientists and inspectors regularly work together in multi-disciplinary teams, for example, in major accident investigations.

Jasbir Singh

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will obtain from the Health and Safety Executive information about the activities of the Executive in connection with the recent death of Jasbir Singh at Idwal Fisher Ltd., Bradford.

Mr. Jackson: The fatal accident to Jasbir Singh on 9 April 1991 at Idwal Fisher Ltd., Bradford was reported to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) West and North Yorkshire area office immediately after it occurred. The HSE began an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident the same day. HSE is currently awaiting the outcome of additional inquiries being made by the police, with whom it is co-operating, before deciding what if any further action may be appropriate.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what position the Liverpool, Riverside constituency held in the list of constituencies of official unemployment on a monthly basis from 1979 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: For areas with different sized workforces, such as parliamentary constituencies, the only meaningful comparisons are based on unemployment rates. These are not available at the level of parliamentary constituencies. However, information relating to the numbers unemployed in the Liverpool, Riverside parliamentary constituency, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library and is available from June 1983.

SCOTLAND

Crab Apples

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the contents of letters written by M. M. Cassie of the Scottish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on the question of crab apples.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Only one letter was written by the official concerned on this subject. In April 1990 the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department was notified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency of the proposed revocation of tolerances for residues of the fungicide captan on various fruits including crab apples because the use of captan on these fruits had been cancelled. Miss Cassie wrote to the agency seeking confirmation that the United States definition of crab apples was specific to that crop and did not include any variety or ordinary eating apples. The agency duly confirmed that the use of captan on ordinary eating apples was not being cancelled or the tolerances revoked.

Hypothermia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing how many people categorised by age died of hypothermia, or illnesses associated with hypothermia, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures requested are given in the table.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, Scotland 1979-90

	Under 25	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65-74*	*75-84*	*85+*	*Total*
1979	3	3	7	15	29	63	89	50	259
1980	8	2	4	6	19	47	85	28	199
1981	8	5	2	14	26	65	87	47	254
1982	2	3	3	7	18	52	73	38	196
1983	5	2	2	15	16	35	60	44	179
1984	3	2	1	6	23	44	56	41	176
1985	2	3	1	6	16	46	93	65	232
1986	3	2	6	8	19	41	90	40	209
1987	2	4	9	8	16	29	51	34	153
1988	3	0	5	9	16	18	49	38	138
1989	7	3	5	4	14	33	51	35	152
1990	1	0	6	5	11	25	60	29	137

Disabled People (Access)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to amend planning regulations to enhance accessibility for disabled people in all new-build projects; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office environment department is preparing amendments to the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990 which will extend access for disabled people to the upper floors of all buildings except dwellings. These amendments are generally in line with similar amendments being prepared for England and Wales and Northern Ireland. They will apply to new build projects and to alterations and extensions to existing buildings in Scotland.

Waste Disposal and Collection

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a timetable for review of the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988 and the subsequent implementation of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to take into account an exception for Scotland equivalent to regulation 9(1) and schedule 6 case 13 to the 1988 regulations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We will undertake consultations on new regulations on waste disposal licensing prior to the implementation of the licensing provisions of part II of the 1990 Act. These provisions are currently scheduled for implementation throughout Great Britain on 1 April 1993. However this timetable will be reviewed in the light of the proposal to set up new environment agencies, for Scotland and for England and Wales, which will assume responsibility for waste regulation.

Information Formats

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make special financial provision to assist local authorities to provide accessible information formats, such as Braille, large print, tape or videos in sign language, in public libraries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statutory responsibility for the local authority public library service in Scotland lies with the local authorities themselves and not with the Secretary of State. It is for each local authority to determine the nature and scale of the service in its area in accordance with its duty to provide adequate library facilities for all persons resident in the area.

Sports (Disabled People)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide district councils with financial assistance to employ sports development officers to promote recreation amongst disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for the local authorities in Scotland to determine their deployment of staff and their expenditure on recreation among disabled people according to their assessment of local needs and priorities, in the light of the financial resources available to them.

HIV

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many non-haemophiliacs in Scotland have contracted HIV infection as a result of national health service transfers of contaminated *(a)* blood, *(b)* blood products and *(c)* tissue;

(2) how many non-haemophiliacs in Scotland who have contracted HIV infection as a result of contaminated national health service blood-tissue transfers *(a)* remain alive, *(b)* have developed AIDS and remain alive and *(c)* have developed AIDS and have since died of an AIDS-related condition.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested. There were 11 reported cases of persons claiming to have contracted HIV infection from contaminated blood, blood products or tissue.

Of the 11 reported cases, all were alive as at 31 October 1991. We have no information that any of these cases have developed AIDS.

Food Manufacturing

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by region the numbers currently employed in the food manufacturing industry.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The most recent estimates of employees in employment according to industry and by region are from the September 1989 census of employment. Data for the food manufacturing industry are given in the table.

Region	*Numbers employed in the food manufacturing industry*
Borders	1,300
Central	900
Dumfries and Galloway	2,900
Fife	1,000
Grampian	10,700
Highland	1,300
Lothian	8,100
Strathclyde	18,300
Tayside	4,300
Islands	700

Source: Employment Department 1989 Census of Employment.

Notes:

1. These estimates are for September 1989.
2. The industries covered are Groups 411-423 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Organ Exchange

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether all Scottish hospitals take part in the human organ exchange scheme run by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The national health service in Scotland participates fully in the voluntary organ sharing arrangements run by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Further Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the colleges of further education which are not under local authority control in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Clause 30 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill defines a "college of further education" as an educational establishment by which further education is provided. Information is not held centrally on such establishments not under local authority control.

School Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by education authority current vacancies in the membership of school boards; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total number of available places in each authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* This information is not available centrally. I have no evidence that there will be a significant difference in the number of school boards once the present round of elections and by-elections is complete early next year.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures his Department is taking to ensure that all school boards have their full contingent of members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* The conduct of school board elections is a matter for education authorities. They have a statutory duty to ensure that parents are informed about the elections.

The Scottish Office undertook a press and television advertising campaign in support of education authorities in August and September to encourage parents to stand and to vote in the elections. In the parents charter, launched in September, we informed parents about the important contribution which school boards now make to the education system. My officials will also shortly issue advice to education authorities and school boards to encourage authorities to give boards greater flexibility in the exercise of their current functions.

In-patient Waiting Lists, Lothian

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each specialty, the current in-patient waiting list figures in the Lothian health board area, and the average in-patient waiting times; and indicate for each specialty *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage awaiting in-patient treatment for (i) over six months, (ii) over 12 months, (iii) over 18 months, (iv) over 24 months and (v) over 36 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* The information available is contained in the following tables. Information on patients waiting over 18 months and over 36 months is not at present collected centrally.

NHS hospitals in Lothian Health Board—(a) in patient waiting lists and time spent on in-patient waiting list: by specialty; (b) average wait for in-patient discharges

(a) In-patient waiting list at 30 June 1991

	Number	*Per cent. waiting 6 months and over*	*Per cent. waiting 12 months and over*	*Per cent. waiting 24 months and over*	*(b) Average (median) wait for in-patient admission for discharges in year ending 31 December 1990 (days)*
All Specialties	11,971	32·1	14·5	4·6	29·4
Acute Specialties	10,036	28·7	11·7	2·9	33·4
General Surgery	3,272	42·5	17·6	2·7	27·9
Orthopaedic surgery	1,201	19·7	6·8	1·7	62·1
ENT surgery	2,547	12·3	4·5	1·1	81·5
Ophthalmology	1,451	33·4	9·6	2·8	30·5
Urology	1,196	51·3	30·3	10·6	26·0
Orthodontists and paediatric dentistry	12	0	0	0	11·5
Oral surgery and medicine	116	18·1	7·8	1·7	48·5
Restorative dentistry	0	—	—	—	—
General medicine	478	17·4	4·8	0	16·2
Dermatology	20	0	0	0	17·4
Rehabilitation medicine	0	—	—	—	—
Respiratory medicine	0	—	—	—	—
Paediatric surgery	140	25·0	8·6	1·4	77·0
Paediatric medicine	20	0	0	0	16·0
Gynaecology	571	20·8	6·3	1·6	31·8
General practice	0	—	—	—	—
Acute mixed	0	—	—	—	—
Other	22	45·5	9·1	0	15·9
Supra-area Specialties	1,714	51·2	30·0	13·6	18·8
Neurosurgery	202	41·6	18·3	0·5	24·9
Cardiothoracic surgery	303	36·3	7·3	0·3	12·2
Plastic surgery	1,093	62·2	41·4	21·1	104·2
Neurology	34	0	0	0	14·5
Radiotherapy	23	0	0	0	14·6
Spinal paralysis	9	44·4	22·2	0	14·5
Obstetric Specialties	0	—	—	—	—
Specialist obstetrics	0	—	—	—	—
GP obstetrics	0	—	—	—	—
Long Stay Specialties	89	21·3	9·0	0	5·9
Geriatric assessment	8	0	0	0	5·1
Geriatric long stay	81	23·5	9·9	0	13·7

	(a) In-patient waiting list at 30 June 1991				(b) Average (median) wait for in-patient admission for discharges in year ending 31 December 1990 (days)
	Number	Per cent. waiting 6 months and over	Per cent. waiting 12 months and over	Per cent. waiting 24 months and over	
Young chronic sick	0	—	—	—	—
Psychiatric Specialties[1]	129	45·7	28·7	16·3	—
Mental Illness	0	—	—	—	—
Psychogeriatrics[1]	116	50·9	31·9	18·1	—
Child psychiatry[1]	13	0	0	0	—
Adolescent psychiatry	0	—	—	—	—
Special Categories	0	—	—	—	—
Communicable diseases	0	—	—	—	—
Special care baby unit	0	—	—	—	—
Intensive therapy unit	0	—	—	—	—
Accident and Emergency	0	—	—	—	—

In addition there were 3 mental handicap patients awaiting transfers to a hospital in the Lothian Health Board area.
[1] Average (median) wait figures are not available for these specialties.

HEALTH

Perinatal Neonatal and Postnatal Deaths

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take to introduce health promotion measures to ensure that the rate of perinatal, neonatal and postneonatal deaths is urgently reviewed and reduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The rate of infant mortality in England is now at its lowest ever level, of 7·9 per 1,000 live births in 1990. Perinatal mortality has also reduced significantly over the last 11 years, from 14·6 per 1,000 total births in 1979 to 8·1 in 1990. We continue our efforts to make further reductions.

By the end of 1991-92, all regional health authorities will have in place a system of epidemiological surveys to investigate the patterns and trends of still births and neonatal deaths in respect of their own population. A national advisory body will shortly be set up to steer the Government's confidential inquiry into still births and deaths in infancy, and regions will be expected to play a full part in that.

For 1992-93, the NHS chief executive has asked all RHAs to agree targets with their district health authorities and family health services authorities to reduce the number of still births and infant deaths still further. At the same time, consideration is being given to improving access to services for certain groups of women, such as those from ethnic minorities, and improvements in the level of consultant cover on labour wards will be sought.

Homelessness

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the accuracy with which his Department enumerates homeless people in capitation calculations for health planning purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: The weighted capitation formula for allocations to regional health authorities takes account of projections of their resident populations but makes no separate allowance for homeless people.

The projections used are prepared by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from figures based on the census of population, adjusted for subsequent births, deaths and migration. The census aims to cover everyone, but adjustments are made for under-enumeration in estimating the usually resident population of an area. In common with everyone else, the homeless are either included in figures for their area of residence, if they provide a usual address, or in the area in which they were enumerated if they have no fixed abode.

The Department currently uses projections derived from the 1981 census, but these will be refined in the light of the 1991 census. In 1991, special measurs were taken to produce as reliable a count of people sleeping rough as possible. The results of this have been laid before Parliament in a supplementary monitor to the 1991 census preliminary report.

Guidance to the NHS invites regional health authorities to consider whether they should adjust the allocations for district health authorities to allow for unenumerated homeless people.

Nurse Regrading

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions he has taken in response to the backlog of nurse regrading appeals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Action to reduce the backlog of nurse grading appeals is a matter for the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council. A joint working group of the negotiating council is currently considering options for streamlining the existing procedure.

Health Authorities (Public Relations)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regional health authorities maintain public relations departments; what is their total annual cost; how big are their staffs; and what increase there has been in their numbers.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Tobacco

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the BMA, the Coronary

Prevention Group and local authorities concerning the ban on tobacco advertising and promotion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a wide range of representations about tobacco advertising and promotion, including from the organisations named.

Special Footwear

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recognised training is available to NHS appliance clerks in the Orthotics Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Training for this group of staff is a local responsibility. There is no prescribed national training course.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how long on average a disabled person has to wait for made-to-measure footwear from the time of prescription to delivery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally. The new NHS contract for prescribed footwear specifies that delivery must be made within six weeks of receipt of an order. Health authorities should ensure that the contractors with whom they place orders are complying with the terms of the national contract and take up any cases of difficulty which may arise.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received a copy of the report "Footwear: A Quality Issue" published by the Disabled Living Foundation on behalf of the Disabled Living Foundation, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, the King's Fund and the Society of Chiropodists.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, and we are considering the recommendations.

New Norwich Hospital

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress with funding and plans for the new district general hospital in Norwich; and when he expects work to begin.

Mr. Dorrell: Options for the provision of hospital services in Norwich are being reappraised.

Health Education Council

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest breakdown of the Health Education Council's budget and its programme for 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is published in the Health Education Authority's operational plan 1991-93, copies of which are available in the Library.

"Enjoy Healthy Eating"

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the objectives behind the publication of the Health Education Authority's "Enjoy Healthy Eating" booklet; and to whom it has been distributed.

Mr. Dorrell: The Health Education Authority's "Enjoy Healthy Eating" booklet is the first guide to be issued since the expert Committee of Medical Aspects of Food Policy report on dietary reference values published in July. It represents the start of the healthy eating education campaign, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State promised in the summer. The information and advice it contains has the full backing of both the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Further nutrition education resources for both professionals and the public are being developed. Two million booklets have been printed, for distribution to a variety of outlets through district health education units.

Organ Exchanges

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which regional health authorities do not participate in the United Kingdom Transplant Authority's organ exchange scheme.

Mr. Dorrell: Participation in the voluntary organ sharing arrangements is a matter for individual units. According to information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority, which administers the scheme on behalf of the profession, units currently not fully contracted into the scheme are located in the South East Thames and South West Thames regional health authorities.

HIV

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many non-haemophiliacs in England have contracted HIV infection as a result of national health service transfers of contaminated *(a)* blood, *(b)* blood products and *(c)* tissue;

(2) how many non-haemophiliacs in England who have contracted HIV infection as a result of contaminated national health service blood-tissue transfers *(a)* remain alive, *(b)* have developed AIDS and remain alive and *(c)* developed AIDS and have since died of an AIDS-related condition.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There have been 49 reports in England of HIV infection in people who received blood, including blood components, in the United Kingdom. There has been one report of HIV infection due to tissue transfer. The number of infected persons thought to be alive is 26. The number reported with AIDS is 26, of whom 21 are known to have died. We have no information on the cause of death.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which scientific advisers the Health Education Authority consults on its health education programme; and what academic members it maintains on its staff.

Mr. Dorrell: The Health Education Authority takes account of a wide range of scientific evidence and advice in developing and implementing its various programmes, and employs staff suitably qualified to enable it to do so. If the hon. Member requires any further information he may wish to contact Sir Donald Maitland, the chairman of the authority, direct.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for an organ transplant; and if he will detail this information for kidneys, heart and lungs, hearts, lungs, livers and pancreas.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

NHS Beds

Mr. Neillist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table to show the average number of national health service beds in use in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the statistical bulletin of 2 October 1990, "NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1979-1989/90", copies of which are available in the Library. More important than the number of beds is the number of patients treated each year. This has increased by more than one third since 1979.

Operations

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the 10 most costly types of surgical operation currently being carried out under the national health service; and how many of each type were carried out in 1978 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* The information requested is not available. The costs of any particular treatment or procedure will vary according to the complexity of each case. The most costly types of operations will inevitably be among the most complex, such as double or triple transplants, which are performed only rarely.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Urban Development Grants

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *385*, how many civil servants, and in which Departments, are engaged in administering the urban development grants which are funded by the International Fund for Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Twelve all from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

CRISP Programme

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *385*, on CRISP—the community regeneration initiative special project—if he will list the precise criteria for determining which towns and villages are in areas of particular disadvantage, state when these criteria were published and indicate what steps are taken to draw them to the attention of interested parties.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter primarily for the International Fund for Ireland. I have asked the chairman of the fund to write to the hon. Gentleman and will place a copy of his letter in the Library.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *385*, if he will list with respect to each town every payment made under the CRISP programme indicating in each case the recipient and the purpose of the payment.

Mr. Needham: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column 385, if he will list the specified areas of Belfast and Londonderry for which urban development grant is available and give the precise criteria for the selection of those areas.

Mr. Needham: Applications may, in principle, be accepted throughout the Belfast city council area. Because demand has exceeded resources for some time, funds are now focused on areas of greatest need. Currently these areas are those covered by the Belfast action teams, including small parts of some team areas which extend beyond the city council boundary. Outside action team areas, but within the Belfast city boundary, only exceptional projects in terms of urban regeneration are considered for grant.

In Londonderry, urban development grant is available for approved projects in the main commercial and industrial sectors of the city within the area encompassed by the former county borough of Londonderry, and within the Londonderry enterprise zone at Campsie and Springtown.

Water Pollution

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the public funds expended and the various watercourses and lakes involved to restock such waters after pollution incidents in which fish were killed.

Mr. Hanley: There is no legislative provision for the use of public funds for general restocking of waters after pollution incidents. Public funds are used to restock waters only in cases where fish kills result from pollution incidents caused by facilities which are in public ownership. Details of such expenditure over the past five years are shown in the following table.

Location	*Year*	*Amount £*
River Creggan	1987	7,913
River Callan	1987	3,000

Restocking has also been carried out in other cases at the expense of those responsible for pollution incidents in keeping with the "polluter pays" principle.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for each of the last three years for which figures are available the number of pollution incidents which resulted in fish kills in Northern Ireland waters, the waters involved, the fish species and approximate numbers, the action taken to restock, to identify the polluters and to prosecute the polluters and the result of court proceedings.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not held centrally. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman in the near future when the details are available.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in the Province are awaiting an organ transplant; if he will give the figure for 1990; and how long on average patients wait for a transplant of a kidney, heart and lungs, heart, lung, liver and cornea.

Mr. Hanley: There are at present in Northern Ireland 72 patients waiting for a kidney transplant and about 30 waiting for corneal grafting. The remaining information requested is not readily available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Stolen Property

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the estimated value of property stolen from the House of Commons during 1990 and in 1991 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The estimated value of property reported stolen in the Palace of Westminster and in the Parliamentary Outbuildings was £16,700 in 1990 and £15,800 to date in 1991. This includes property stolen from contractors, which accounts for two thirds of the 1990 figure, as well as from Members, their staff and staff of both Houses.

Each report of property stolen is vigorously followed up by the police, but it would greatly assist if articles of value were secured and desks and filing cabinets locked when offices are left unattended.

DEFENCE

TOGS System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present status of the thermal observation and gunnery sighting system contract with United Scientific; and whether any penalty clauses have been invoked.

Mr. Alan Clark: A TOGS contract was placed with Avimo Ltd., a subsidiary of United Scientific Holdings. Deliveries of main systems are now complete and only the delivery of a number of spares is outstanding. The Department is not pursuing liquidated damages under this contract.

AWACS Agreement

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present value of offset contracts created as a result of the Boeing airborne warning and communication system agreement; and if the agreed amounts are being fulfilled.

Mr. Alan Clark: Boeing has to date submitted progress reports listing contracts placed with United Kingdom companies totalling $1·855 billion, of which we have so far agreed that $1·197 billion should count for credit. I have little doubt that Boeing will meet the agreed target of some $1·5 billion.

Explosives and Propellants

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many explosives and propellant contracts were placed in the periods *(a)* January to July and *(b)* July to December, for each of the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990, respectively; and what were the values of those contracts;

(2) what has been the expenditure on explosives and propellants in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department purchases the great majority of its explosives and propellants as integral parts of whole munitions, rather than under specific contracts. Overall expenditure on these components is not separately identifiable.

Starfighter Aircraft (Fuel Leak)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report on the fuel leak from a C141 Starfighter aircraft at Air Force base Mildenhall in 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any such report.

HMS Itchen

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answers of 7 November, *Official Report*, column *252*, he will indicate the implications of the refit of HMS Itchen referred to therein for the availability of sea training facilities at HMS Wessex.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the refit of HMS Itchen, reservists' requirements for training at sea can be satisfied by using a mine sweeper fleet vessel allocated to another sea training centre. In addition, even when a ship is in refit some opportunities for training on that ship will still exist.

Frigates

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his intention to issue a request for proposals for the main gun armament of the replacement for the Type 42 destroyer.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We intend to issue shortly an invitation to industry, through the Ministry of Defence *Contracts Bulletin*, to register interest in bidding for the supply of the main gun armament of the replacement for the type 42 frigate.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards an integrated defensive aids sub-system for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our policy towards the European fighter aircraft defensive aids sub-system is to equip the aircraft with a capability which meets the operational requirement in the most cost-effective manner.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the proposal that the Luftwaffe should lead the air component of NATO's rapid reaction corps.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At their defence planning committee meeting last May, NATO Defence Ministers agreed, in principle, to the formation of air reaction forces. Since then, work has continued in NATO to determine the precise size and structure of such forces, including the command and control arrangements, which must be efficient and militarily effective.

Menwith Hill Station (Cable)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when work to lay a new cable between Menwith Hill station and Hunter's Stones post office tower will be completed and at what total estimated cost; what is the purpose of the new cable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has no knowledge of work to lay a new cable between Menwith Hill station and Hunter's Stones post office tower.

Defence Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is available from his Department to British companies taking part in the Eurosatory land defence equipment European exhibition due to be held in Paris in June 1992.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Defence Export Services Organisation offers advice and, where appropriate, support to any United Kingdom firm intending to market defence-related products overseas.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 November 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sunday Trading

Mr. Pike: To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussions his Department has had with local authorities regarding enforcement of existing Sunday shopping legislation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have had correspondence with three local authorities in England recently concerning enforcement of the law and, in particular, the effect of recent decisions of the courts.

A local authority in Northern Ireland has also asked me whether I would be prepared to consent to an application for an injunction against a retailer that was allegedly breaking the law. My consent is needed under the law of Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT

Seat Belts

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to require seat belts to be fitted in buses *(a)* used to transport school children and *(b)* in all buses and public service vehicles.

Mr. Chope: By reason of European Commission directives, it is not possible for the United Kingdom unilaterally to require seat belts on all seats in new buses and coaches.

Highways

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the announced £1½ billion additional expenditure is to be invested in highways in East Anglia; what sums are currently being spent on highways in this region; and if he will publish a list of the trunk road schemes currently under construction, shortly to be started and in preparation in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex with the approximate cost of each.

Mr. Chope: The £1½ billion additional expenditure over three years announced by the Secretary of State on 6 November is almost all for public transport provision throughout the country, including East Anglia. Provision for highways was not increased.

Forecast expenditure on motorways and trunk roads in the Department's eastern region—the counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire—is estimated at £312 million in 1991-92.

The total of local authority expenditure budgets for local roads in these counties for 1991-92 is £102 million capital and £198 million current.

Following is a list of the motorway and trunk road schemes in progress in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

	Approximate £ million works costs (excluding VAT)
NORFOLK, NATIONAL SCHEMES	
Under construction	
A47 East Dereham—North Tuddenham	7·6
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 1	9·7
Contract 2	10·2
Contract 3	17·1
Contract 4	22·6
A12 Gorleston Relief Road	19·2
A47 Narborough Bypass	2·25
A10 Brandon Creek to Southery	1·0
To start construction this financial year	
A11 Thetford to Bridgham Heath	3·4
A11 Besthorpe to Wymondham	22·9
In preparation	
A17/A47 Tilney High End to Sutton Bridge	35·2
A10/A47 A134 Hardwick Roundabout Improvement	16·4
A47 Hardwick to East Dereham	72·0
A47 North Tuddenham to Easton	18·0
A47 Blofield to Acle	4·7
A47 Acle Straight Improvement	15·0
A11 Fiveways Roundabout to Thetford	42·1
A11 Roundham Heath to Attleborough	20·4
A11 Attleborough Bypass Improvement	9·0
A140 Dickleburgh to Norwich	24·0
A140 Scole to Dickleburgh	10·0
A47 Walpole Highway—Tilney High End	18·36
SUFFOLK, NATIONAL SCHEMES	
In preparation	
A12 Hartlesham—Wickham Market	12·6
A12 Wickham Market—Saxmundham	13·6
A12 Saxmundham Bypass Dualling	10·4
A12 Saxmundham—South of Wrentham	23·0
A12 South of Wrentham—Kessingland	8·0
A12 Lowestoft Relief Road	70·0
A12 South of Four Sisters GSJ	3·0
A45 Quarries Cross GSJ	3·0
A45 Rockery Cross GSJ	2·0
A140 Beacon Hill—Scole	34·0
ESSEX, NATIONAL SCHEMES	
Under construction	
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ	16·0
In preparation	
M25 Junctions 25-28 Rapid Widening	100·0
A127 M25—Rayleigh Weir	85·0
M12 M25—Chelmsford	65·0
A12 Chelmsford Bypass Widening	35·0
A12 Hatfield Peverel—Marks Tey Widening	40·0
A120 Stansted—Braintree (100 per cent. grant)	73·0
M11 Junction 5 North facing Slips	6·0
M11 Widening	75·0
A13 Wennington—Mar Dyke	23·5
A120 Braintree—A12	28·6

A1 (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of the upgrading to motorway standards of the A1 in North Yorkshire and the completion date of the programme.

Mr. Chope: Seven A1(M) upgrading schemes are wholly or partially within the county of North Yorkshire. The estimated cost of all these schemes at current prices is approximately £550 million and completion is expected within 10 years.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to bring forward amending regulations regarding the orange badge scheme for the disabled.

Mr. Chope: Amending regulations will be brought forward within the next fortnight. The intention is that the new scheme should come into effect on 2 March 1992.

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to alter the public service vehicle and goods vehicle licensing system to extend to parish councils the right to make representations about public service vehicle and goods vehicle operating centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: A commitment to amend the goods vehicle operator licence provisions to give a general right of environmental representation for parish councils was made in 1989. This followed a wide-ranging review of operators licensing and acknowledged the role of parish councils as representative of local communities.

A change to the primary legislation will be required.

Public service vehicle operating centres are not currently subject to environmental control through operator licensing. This is being reviewed at present.

M5 (Drains)

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the motorway contractor's proposals in the M5 junctions 6 and 8 widening contract to change from modern drains specification to traditional drains.

Mr. Chope: The contractor's proposal to use filter drains instead of Fin drains was within the scope of the Department's specification and the terms of the contract.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make arrangements to obtain information, for inclusion in the annual road accident statistics, about the numbers of fatalities and injuries in road accidents in Great Britain resulting from the use of motor vehicless which have been stolen or driven without the owners' consent, resulting from the use of motor vehicles driven for other criminal purposes, and resulting from the use of motor vehicles by the police in connection with the performance of their duties, including when pursuing drivers of vehicles which have been stolen or taken without the owners' consent or used for other criminal purposes.

Mr. Chope: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Building Contracts

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with John Laing Construction and other major motorway road contractors regarding changing contract specifications after a contract has been awarded by public tender.

Mr. Chope: There are regular discussions with the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors about matters of common interest.

Road Accidents (A1)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths and how many injuries have occurred as a result of road traffic accidents on the A1 road between Morpeth and the Scottish border in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Chope: The number of deaths and injuries as a result of accidents on the A1 between Morpeth and the Scottish border during the period from 1980-90 are shown in the following table:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*
1980	8	42	66
1981	6	25	92
1982	6	40	91
1983	7	20	77
1984	11	33	74
1985	4	35	112
1986	6	35	84
1987	5	18	68
1988	4	24	65
1989	8	26	72
1990	4	33	127
Total	69	331	928

Motorways (Drainage)

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the motorway contractors adhere to consulting engineers' specifications for drainage on major contracts.

Mr. Chope: Under the terms of the contract the engineer has a duty to consider alternative materials or methods put forward by the contractor and may approve their use provided they meet the criteria set out in the Department's specification for highway works and represent good value for money.

Air Pollution

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to take to combat air pollution caused by road transport.

Mr. Chope: Stricter limits on emissions have very recently been agreed by the United Kingdom and its EC partners.

On 26 June the EC Council of Ministers adopted an amending directive 91/441/EEC setting tighter limits on emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) by new cars and light vans. The standards set by the directive will require almost all new petrol-engined cars from the end of 1992 to use three-way catalytic converters and to run on unleaded petrol. Diesel cars and light vans will need to comply with a strict limit on particulates—smoke.

Pride of Portsmouth

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the dismissal of the British crew members of the Pride of Portsmouth.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. McCluskie of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers has

written to the Secretary of State concerning the owners' decision to replace the British crew members of the Pride of Portsmouth with foreign nationals. I will be responding shortly on behalf of the Secretary of State and will answer the points made by Mr. McCluskie.

Scandinavian Star

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will obtain a copy of the Danish inquiry into the case of the Scandinavian Star.

Mr. McLoughlin: A copy of the inquiry report on the Scandinavian Star accident has been requested from the Danish maritime authorities.

Ferry Safety

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the implications for safety of British passengers travelling on ferry services crewed and staffed by non-English speaking officers and ratings.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is kept under review. Surveyors make unannounced safety inspections of foreign registered passenger ro-ro ferries visiting United Kingdom ports and, among other items, they are instructed to check that enough crew can speak English to be able to give announcements and communicate with United Kingdom passengers in an emergency.

Road Schemes

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will be issuing for consultation the criteria he proposes to use in exercising his discretionary power under section 62 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 to acquire property which is seriously affected by his Department's road schemes; and whether he expects to make the criteria public before the end of 1991.

Mr. Chope: Guidelines for the use of the new discretionary power to acquire property seriously affected by the Department's road schemes will be announced as soon as possible. The guidelines will be reviewed in the light of experience, and any representations received will be taken into account.

Lyme Bay

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to inform all the agencies to which he wrote on 22 July about anchoring in Lyme bay that ships may continue to call off Lyme/Torbay for legitimate servicing, and that they may anchor there for that purpose for periods of time.

Mr. McLoughlin: Letters sent out by my Department on 22 July were directed to the owners of three ships and referred specifically to the long-term anchoring of those ships in Lyme bay with the attendant risk of large-scale pollution. It is not proposed to write again to these owners on this matter.

Fishing Vessels (Accidents)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in relation to the losses of the fishing vessels *(a)* Girl Fiona, *(b)* Inspire, *(c)* Alert II, *(d)* Boy Shaun, *(e)* Sylvia Marita, *(f)* Jake II, *(g)* Tarradale II, *(h)* Pearl, *(i)* Mhari L and *(j)* South Stack which had Marine Accident Investigation Branch inquiries; which of these were published; which had any other inquiry and of what nature; and which of those were published.

Mr. McLoughlin: All the accidents occurred before July 1989, when the marine accident investigation branch was set up. Under the pre-existing system losses were investigated by the Department's surveyors, but there was no provision for making reports available for general release, unless the accident was subject to public inquiry. The loss of Boy Shaun, being an Irish vessel, will have been investigated by the Irish authorities. None of the incidents listed by the hon. Member led to such an inquiry. Summary reports of the surveyor's investigations into the losses of Mhari L and of Inspire were produced and the hon. Member will recall having being sent copies.

The deaths of those lost in the accidents were subject to inquest, fatal accident inquiry or to a death inquiry under the Merchant Shipping Acts. Reports of such proceedings are not published though the findings are made known to those concerned.

Since July 1989, specific provision has been made in the relevant regulations for the reports of investigations submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport to be published under the terms of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will instigate a full public inquiry into the sinking of the Wilhelmina J; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will instigate a full public inquiry into the sinking of the Ocean Hound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Both accidents are the subject of investigation under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989. Such investigations are very comprehensive and are the most expeditious means of establishing the nature and cause of a marine accident, and my right hon. and learned Friend is not minded to order full public inquiries.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about incidents involving *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* other fishing boats in United Kingdom waters and submarines in each of the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991 to date; what action he is currently considering to reduce such incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The fishing vessels reported to the Department as having been involved in incidents or suspected incidents in UK waters with submarines from 1 January 1989 to date are as listed, together with the reported date incident.

Vessel	*Date of Incident*
New Dawn	3 January 1989
Lau Ann	22 January 1989
Spes Bona (and Arturus and Strathayre)	27 February 1989
Seagull	31 March 1989
Northern Lights	31 March 1989
Laurel	17 April 1989
Huntress	28 June 1989
Scotia	13 November 1989
Sarah Marie	7 December 1989
Moray Adventurer	4 October 1990

Vessel	Date of Incident
Antares	22 November 1990
Green Eagle	14 December 1990
Delvan	13 February 1991
Maritan	19 February 1991
Hercules II	February 1991
Wavecrest, Alpha and Athena	6 March 1991
Swyn-Y-Mor	20 March 1991
Saffron	12 November 1991

All are UK vessels except the Laurel—Isle of Man—and the Sarah Marie—Jersey.

A sub-group of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety group—which will include representatives of the fishing industry, the Fisheries Departments and the Ministry of Defence—will meet on 9 December to discuss safety issues arising from the interaction of fishing vessels and submerged submarines. My Department is also giving urgent consideration to the recommendations contained in the determination of the fatal accident inquiry which followed the loss of the Antares with regard to the issue of fishing vessel safety certificates, the siting of liferafts on fishing vessels and arrangements for the carriage of emergency position indicating radio beacons and will consider the marine accident investigation branch's recommendations as soon as these are available.

British Rail

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had over his proposals to privatise British Rail.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have had a number of representations about British Rail privatisation. We expect to publish proposals soon.

Pilots

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to arrange for consultations to take place between his Department and the United Kingdom Pilots Association, Europilots and local pilots before decisions are taken and changes made which affect the livelihoods of the pilots; if he will ensure that guidelines are published in consultation with the pilots regarding anchoring of tankers in Torbay and Lyme bay: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The action taken with regard to tankers in Lyme bay did not affect the overall demand or the arrangements for pilotage and the Secretary of State saw no need to consult the pilot organisations. I have arranged to meet my hon. Friend to discuss these questions.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list and give full details of all investigations carried out by the marine accident investigation branch since April 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A list of investigations will be found in the appendix to the occasional marine accident investigation branch publication entitled "Summary of Investigations"; the next edition is to be published before the end of this year. The list of investigations carried out between 1 April 1991 and 15 November 1991 is as follows.

Date of accident	Name of vessel	Type of vessel	Flag	Size	Type of accident
24 July 1991	Valulla	Class V Passenger Launch	United Kingdom	112·06 grt	Fire
24 July 1991	Pride of Baltimore II	Sailing ship	United States of America	97 grt	Grounding
28 July 1991	Southern Comfort	Class V Passenger	United Kingdom	—	Accident to Person
29 July 1991	Loch Maravaig/ Amity	FV/ FV	United Kingdom/ United Kingdom	12·59m/ 20·68m	Collision
30 July 1991	Larrissa/ Rebis	FV/ FV	United Kingdom/ Danish	37m —	Collision
30 July 1991	Jubilence	Cargo	United Kingdom	475 grt	Accident to Person
31 July 1991	Thomas William	FV	United Kingdom	9·75m	Capsize/Sinking
1 August 1991	Geestcape	Cargo	United Kingdom	8,030 grt	Fire
5 August 1991	Kedarost	FV	United Kingdom	23·41m	Fire
5 August 1991	Emerald	Bulk Carrier	Isle of Man	1,583 grt	Fire
12 August 1991	Ocean Hound	FV	United Kingdom	21·40m	Sank
17 August 1991	Fidelity	FV	United Kingdom	14·33m	Grounding
22 August 1991	Autobahn	Vehicle Carrier	United Kingdom	499 grt	Machinery Failure
25 August 1991	Un-named power boats	Power boats	Various	Various	Grounding
28 August 1991	Calby Queen/ Un-named tender	Passenger/ Tender	— —	— —	Collision
2 September 1991	Ocean Crest	FV	United Kingdom	24·34m	Accident to Person
4 September 1991	Esso Mersey	Tanker	United Kingdom	11,898 grt	Explosion
5 September 1991	Margaret & William II/ Jacobus Broere	FV/ Tanker	United Kingdom/ Netherlands	10·90m 3,693 grt	Missing
12 September 1991	CPC Gallia	Cargo	Antigua	6,500 grt	Grounding
18 September 1991	Arran Lass	FV	United Kingdom	15·24m	Fire
19 September 1991	Mountwood	Passenger Ferry	United Kingdom	464 grt	Contact

Date of accident	Name of vessel	Type of vessel	Flag	Size	Type of accident
26 September 1991	Brummi/ Norina	Cargo/ FV	St. Vincent/ United Kingdom	423 grt 39·25m	Collision
26 September 1991	Diamond	Bulk Carrier	Norway	35,873 grt	Explosion
29 September 1991	Marga Cortes	Cargo	Honduras	499 grt	Stranding
1 October 1991	Whispering Hope/ Sagacity	FV/ Cargo	United Kingdom/ Bahamas	10·42m 1,594 grt	Collision
4 October 1991	Hoverspeed G8	Ro-Ro Passenger	Bahamas	3,003 grt	Broken down
5 October 1991	Farstream	Tug/Supply	United Kingdom	1,583 grt	Accident to Person
14 October 1991	Freedom	FV	United Kingdom	14·33m	Fire
20 October 1991	Sally Star	Passenger	Bahamas	9,120 grt	Fire
28 October 1991	Sincere	FV	United Kingdom	9·35m	Grounding
31 October 1991	Rix Eagle	Barge	United Kingdom	292 grt	Explosion

Environmental Assessments

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the tendering procedure adopted by his Department when employing consultants to undertake an environmental assessment.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Generally the tendering procedure for appointment of the main consultant is by means of a one or two-envelope competition, dependent upon the cost of the works. Under the one-envelope system, quality and financial bids are assessed together.

Under the two-envelope system, quality is first assessed and then the financial bids are considered. The quality envelope contains the consultant's proposals for handling and staffing the commission and details of the firm's relevant experience. A panel gives an overall quality marking to each tender. Tenders which receive unacceptable quality markings are not considered further. The second envelope is then opened in which the consultants provide details of their financial bids. The contract is awarded to the consultant who tenders the best balance of quality and price.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria outside consultants are required to meet when appointed by him to carry out an environmental assessment.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* The consultants who are appointed to undertake the preparation and supervision of trunk road schemes are generally large multi-disciplinary civil engineering firms which have significant resources and well-proven skills. They are responsible for the full range of duties associated with each commission, including an environmental assessment where appropriate.

Many large firms have a separate specialist division dealing with environmental matters. Where a consultant does not have, or needs to supplement, in-house environmental expertise, he will appoint a sub-consultant. Such appointments require the Department's approval. The Department considers proposed appointments on the basis of relevant expertise, capacity to undertake work and a proven track record.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the findings of the standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment report; and what timetable he envisages to incorporate the recommendations of that report into his Department's environmental assessment procedures.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Early next year.

Birkham Wood

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what alternative routes he considered to the proposal to build a road through Birkham Wood.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Five routes were considered by the inspector at the public inquiry in 1989 before the Secretary of State confirmed the route proposed by North Yorkshire county council.

Road Fund Taxes (Coaches)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each European Community country the road fund tax payable on *(a)* a 30-seater, *(b)* a 40-seater *(c)* a 50-seater and *(d)* a 60-seater coach.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The information requested is not available for all member countries. Not all countries use seating capacity as a basis for calculating VED rates. Many use gross vehicle weight instead. Accurate comparisons between the two systems are difficult to make as there is no direct correlation between seating capacity and weight.

The current yearly rates applicable in those countries for which information is available are as follows

United Kingdom

VED rates for buses and coaches are calculated according to seating capacity

Seating capacity	12 month rate £
Up to 8	100·00
9-16	130·00
17-35	200·00
36-60	300·00
61 and over	450·00

Germany

Buses and coaches are taxed according to their net maximum weight and the number of axles. The current yearly rates are as follows:

Maximum weight (kg)	12 month VED rate (sterling equivalent) 2 axles £	2 axles plus £
14,000	806	755
15,000	959	870
16,000	1,172	1,017
17,000	1,396	1,172
18,000	1,630	1,334
19,000	1,874	1,506
20,000	2,129	1,678

Greece

Tax on private coaches is charged at £3·86 per seat. Yearly rates for a range of coaches (rounded to the nearest £) are as follows:

Seating capacity	12 month rate (sterling equivalent) £
30	116
40	154
50	193
60	232

Ireland

Coaches are taxed according to seating capacity. The current yearly rates are as follows:

Seating capacity	12 month VED rate (sterling equivalent) £
9-20	94
21-40	150
41-60	207
61 and over	263

Luxembourg

Coaches are taxed according to the net weight of the vehicle. Tax rates increase for every 200 kg. Current rates for a range of coaches are as follows:

Net weight (kg)	12-month VED rate (sterling equivalent) (£)
14,000	30
15,000	32
16,000	34
17,000	35
18,000	37
19,000	39

Netherlands

Coaches are taxed according to the net weight of the vehicle and the type of fuel used. There are small differences in taxation depending on the province in which the coach is registered. Rates increase for every 100 kg. Current rates for a range of coaches in the province of Zuid-Holland are as follows:

Net weight (kg)	12-month VED rate (sterling equivalent) Benzine or diesel (£)	Other fuel (£)
14,000	1,375	4,597
15,000	1,456	4,917
16,000	1,538	5,237
17,000	1,620	5,556
18,000	1,701	5,876
19,000	1,783	6,196
20,000	1,864	6,515

Spain

Coaches are taxed according to seating capacity. The current yearly charges are as follows:

Seating capacity	12-month VED rate (sterling equivalent) (£)
21-50	103
50 or over	128

A1 (Bypasses)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many towns along the route of the A1 have been bypassed; how many towns are planned for bypasses to be constructed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Chope *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The provision of bypasses for towns and villages is a continuing feature of the trunk road programme. Since the early 1960s some 26 towns have been bypassed as a result of realignment of the A1. Our current plans to upgrade the A1 to motorway largely follow the corridor of the existing A1.

Thornbridge Viaduct

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work is expected to finish on the Thornbridge viaduct of the M6 motorway in Birmingham; and what are the reasons for, and costs of, the delays in completion.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The Thornbridge viaduct contract south of Thornbridge avenue is on programme for completion in March 1992. No delays are expected on this contract.

Traffic Forecasts

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of the recent report by the Association of County Councils into increased traffic forecasts when considering the future of his roads programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* My right hon. Friend welcomes the Association of County Councils' report "Towards a Sustainable Transport Policy" as a contribution to the important debate on how we should respond to the continuing growth in demand for travel, both in urban areas and between them. A range of measures is needed, including investment in roads, and in public transport, traffic management, and attention to land use planning. The Department's road traffic demand

forecasts are not a target; the programme of investment in inter-urban road improvements strikes a balance between the economic benefits from avoiding future congestion, which are recognised in the report, safety benefits, and environmental and other considerations.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many sites of special scientific interest are within 100 m of options for alternative trunk routes currently under consideration by his Department; and if he will name each site of special scientific interest and proposed route;

(2) how many sites of special scientific interest are within 100 m of currently proposed routes for trunk road improvements; and if he will name each site of special scientific interest and the name of the proposed route.

Mr. Chope: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. One tenth of land in England is covered by over 4,000 sites of special scientific interest.

The Department consults widely at many stages in a scheme's development. Where proposed schemes may affect sites of special scientific interest, the Department consults English Nature.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Polly Peck

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the position of Her Majesty's Government on the question of state immunity being used in the case of Polly Peck in connection with the unrecognised state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government do not recognise the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" as a state. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman, which is sub judice.

Parking Fines

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretry of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many unpaid parking fines there are attributable to British missions in European Community countries; and if he will make a statement about reciprocal arrangements for the payment of parking fines.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are not aware of any unpaid parking fines. We instruct staff at all British missions overseas to pay any parking fines promptly. There are no reciprocal arrangements.

European Community Draft Directives

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on each European Community country's procedures for considering draft directives before their consideration by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A European Parliament publication "Bodies within National Parliaments specialising in European Community affairs", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, gives information on national scrutiny arrangements. Each member state has its own procedures for considering proposals with national administrations, and consulting outside parties.

Visas

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the visa for Sabia Begum will be issued by the high commission in Dhaka, ref. BEG/A2627, as authorised on 10 September 1991.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action he has taken to assist in the strengthening of democracy in Romania.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We take every opportunity to encourage the Romanian Government to adhere to their programme of political and economic reform, most recently during the visit of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Romania on 18 to 20 November.

Under the know-how fund, which was extended to Romania in May this year, and other programmes, we are assisting with the establishment of democratic institutions by, for example, providing training programmes for government officials, journalists, and radio and television personnel; and supporting visits in both directions by parliamentarians and members of political parties. We have also paid for two legal experts to visit Romania to advise on drafting the new constitution.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Safety

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland roads service has to improve safety at Pound street and Circular road/Harbour highway road junctions, Larne, Co. Antrim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In the light of the tragic accident on 23 October a further examination of these junctions is under way to identify whether any additional improvements are necessary.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fatalities there have been as a result of accidents at *(a)* the Circular road/Harbour highway junction, Larne and *(b)* the Pound street/Harbour highway junction, Larne, since their construction.

Mr. Needham: Since 1976 when these two junctions were constructed the number of fatalities as a result of accidents at each has been *(a)* 9 *(b)* 3.

Parking

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation for Northern Ireland which would enable residents to obtain parking permits from the Department of Environment (NI) Roads Service, allowing them to park outside their own premises under a resident parking scheme.

Mr. Needham: Residents parking schemes are being considered for inclusion in future primary legislation.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if Rathlin island will achieve designation as environmentally sensitive;

(2) if he will name parts of Fermanagh as environmentally sensitive.

Mr. Hanley: I announced on 20 November that both Rathlin island and other parts of Antrim, and parts of Fermanagh, are presently being considered for designation as environmentally sensitive areas. Details are being completed and interested parties will be consulted in due course. A copy of the press release has been placed in the Library.

Carrickfergus

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the increase in *(a)* population and *(b)* unemployment in the borough of Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, in the last three years; and what consideration he has given to the establishment of a job club in Carrickfergus.

Mr. Needham: Mid-year population estimates for June 1990, the latest available, for the Carrickfergus district council area show an increase of 1,700 in the population over the three-year period from 30 June 1987. Over the same period unemployment in the area decreased by 630. Between October 1988 and October 1991 unemployment fell by 275.

In considering locations for job clubs the Training and Employment Agency takes into account the relative numbers of long-term unemployed in the area and the availability of other job clubs within a reasonable travelling distance. It is not proposed to establish a job club in Carrickfergus.

Unlawful Killings

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the number of Catholics and the number of Protestants who have been killed in Northern Ireland in the current year to the latest available date.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Information on the religious affiliation of those who have died in Northern Ireland this year as a result of the security situation is not available. Overall statistics for such fatalities are, however, set out as follows:

	[1]1991
Civilians[2]	66
RUC	6
Regular Army	5
UDR	7

[1] As at 19 November 1991.
[2] Category includes suspect terrorists.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on unlawful killings in the Province since his oral answers of 14 November.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Three civilians were killed in an incident near Craigavon on the evening of 14 November in what appears to have been a sectarian attack on workers making their way home.

The RUC investigation into these and other recent killings is being vigorously pursued. Measures have been taken to enhance the security force presence in areas believed to be most at risk.

Terrorism

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civilians have been killed, and how many wounded, by terrorist action since 1969; and of these how many were children aged under 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* Since 1969, a total of 1,713 civilians have been killed and more than 22,000 civilians have been injured as a direct result of terrorist action in Northern Ireland. Of those killed, 24 were children under the age of 10 years. Information is not available on how many children have been injured.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Associations

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the payment of management fees to housing associations by local authorities following the decision of the district auditor in relation to the payment of such fees by Hammersmith and Fulham council.

Mr. Yeo: I understand the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is considering the legal implications of certain payments made to housing associations as management fees. My Department is in touch with the borough on this issue.

Public Rights of Way

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the planning inspection handbook dealing with public rights of way will be revised to take into account the Court of Appeal decision in the Rubinstein case mentioned in paragraphs D8. 33.

Mr. Yeo: The section of the planning inspectors handbook dealing with public rights of way is currently under revision and is being amended to take account of the effect of the Court of Appeal decision on the Rubinstein case. At present it is not possible to give a firm date when the updated section will be finalised. However, guidance on the implications of the Court of Appeal judgment affecting the Rubinstein decision is set out in Department of the Environment circular 18/90 which was issued to inspectors shortly after its publication. They are therefore already aware of the most recent guidance and are able to take it into account where applicable.

Pollution and Wastes Directorate

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when each of the six extra staff recently added to his Department's pollution control and wastes directorate took up their posts; what will be their duties; what grades they are employed at; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The information is:

Post created	*Grades*	*Tasks*
1 September	1 Grade 6 and 1 Personal Secretary	Work on setting up local authority waste disposal companies.
1 October	1 Grade 7	Secretary of Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee
1 October	1 HEO	International waste management policy work.
1 October	1 Administration trainee	Assistance to Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment.
1 October	1 Divisional Secretary	General assistance of environment protection and industry division.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department proposes to issue new guidelines for charging for collection of refuse from mixed hereditaments.

Mr. Baldry: We intend to implement those provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 relating to the collection of waste, along with other provisions of part II of the Act, on 1 April 1992. Implementation of these provisions requires us to revise the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988. The circular which will accompany the revised regulations will provide guidance on charging for the collection of waste from mixed (composite) hereditaments. The Department will consult the local authority associations and others on a draft of the regulations and circular.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information Her Majesty's Government provided to the European Commission under article 13 of Council directive 84/631/EEC on the transfrontier shipment of toxic and hazardous waste; whether this information is publicly available; and what information he has regarding submissions under article 13 by the other EC member states.

Mr. Baldry: The Commission has said that member states will be invited to report on a number of directives concerning waste, including 84/631/EEC, on the basis of a single standardised questionnaire which is in preparation. The United Kingdom will therefore make its report under article 13 of this directive through the questionnaire.

Wild-caught Birds (Imports)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the proportion of imported wild-caught birds which are destined for *(a)* high street pet shops, *(b)* aviculturalists and *(c)* conservation, research and zoos.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available in the form requested. Since September, my Department has issued licences to import about 60,000 birds covered by conservation legislation. Some 98 per cent. of these birds were required for commercial purposes and the remaining 2 per cent. for personal, breeding or scientific purposes.

UN Environment Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions were agreed on the transfrontier transport of toxic materials at working group II of the third preparatory committee meeting of the United Nations conference on environment and development in August and September 1991.

Mr. Baldry: The United Nations conference on the environment and development working group considered proposals relating to the transfrontier transport of toxic materials for the UNCED action plan (agenda 21). These will now be revised for consideration by the preparatory committee at its fourth session in March 1992. The Government believe the conference can give further impetus to international moves to greater self-sufficiency in waste disposal and improved waste management, including the needs of developing countries.

Harrogate Borough Council

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate received by his Department of the total expenditure by Harrogate borough council for the present financial year.

Mr. Key: Harrogate borough council's budget estimate of net revenue expenditure for 1991-92 is £14·5 million.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of council dwellings sold in the current financial year by Harrogate borough council.

Mr. Yeo: During the first six months of the current financial year, Harrogate borough council received £743,000 from the sale of fixed assets, including £558,000 from the sale of houses and flats. The total receipts figure may include receipts from the sale of land as well as property.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has studied the environmental implications of burning Orimulsion for the generation of electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is closely monitoring the current trials for burning Orimulsion at two power stations—Ince and Richborough. The environmental impacts of emissions from power stations are taken into consideration by

HMIP when determining authorisations under part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. HMIP is required to include in any such authorisations conditions to ensure that best available techniques not entailing excessive cost —BATNEEC—will be used to prevent or minimise harmful emissions.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a revised code of guidance to local authorities on homelessness which specifically addresses the issue of how to interpret those in mortgage arrears.

Mr. Yeo: My Department published a revised third edition of the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities on 14 August, and copies are available in the Library. This gives detailed advice to local authorities on their homelessness functions, including matters that should be taken into account when considering the cases of applicants who are homeless as a result of mortgage arrears. Local authorities are required to have regard to this guidance; but in deciding whether to accept responsibility to secure accommodation for any applicant, authorities must consider the circumstances of each individual case. I do not consider further guidance to be necessary.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has received from the European Commission over the last five years regarding the 1980 drinking water quality directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: There are frequent communications between the Department and the European Commission, formal and informal, about various aspects of this and other directives. The most significant of those relating to the drinking water directive over the last five years have been as follows.

The Commission has pursued infraction proceedings against the United Kingdom alleging failure to incorporate the directive into legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland, to apply it to water for food production, and to comply in certain respects with the directive's requirements in relation to lead and nitrate. I firmly believe that, following a hearing later this month, the European Court of Justice should recognise that we have in fact taken all practicable steps to meet the requirements of the directive.

The Environment Commissioner wrote to the then Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside in May 1989 expressing himself satisfied that provisions in what is now the Water Act 1989, and statements made in another place during the debates on it, showed that the United Kingdom intended

"to rectify any deficiencies in water supplies as quickly as possible taking certain practicalities into account".

We have since sent the Commission detailed information about the compliance programme which is now in place in all parts of the United Kingdom. As we have told the Commission, we believe this clearly demonstrates that we are implementing the drinking water directive successfully and effectively. Indeed, we do not know of any other member state which has a comparable compliance programme firmly committed and fully funded. We have also sent the Commission the first report of the drinking water inspectorate covering 1990, which is also unique in the Community as a published and comprehensive record of drinking water quality. The chief drinking water inspector will be making a presentation about the report to staff of the Commission in Brussels next month.

Water Act 1989

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the cases which have been referred to the Countryside Commission under section 152 of the Water Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This information is commercially sensitive and is provided to the Secretary of State on the understanding that it will not be made public without the agreement of the water companies.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those water companies which have been successfully prosecuted and which are currently in the process of being prosecuted under the Water Act 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The drinking water inspectorate is investigating a number of incidents which may have had an adverse effect on drinking water quality. When their investigations are concluded they will advise me whether to prosecute the companies concerned.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of water supply disconnections over the last available period of 12 consecutive months for each water company in England and Wales.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services. Companies are required under their licence to report the number of domestic disconnections to the area customer service committee of Ofwat every six months. By agreement non-domestic disconnections are also reported. The director general published on 17 July figures for the year ending on 31 March.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside all capital receipts from the sale of council houses received each year since the introduction of the right to buy.

Mr. Yeo: The total discounted values of all sales of houses and flats for each year from 1980-81, as reported by local authorities, are in the table. Actual cash receipts in any year will depend on the extent to which the sales were financed by loans from the authorities.

Yorkshire and Humberside Region[1]
Discounted value of all sales (£'000)

Local Authority	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Beverley	981	1,443	2,200	2,170	1,062	1,159	1,136	1,429	2,966	3,049	1,420
Boothferry	2,107	2,154	1,518	882	829	623	952	914	1,620	2,275	809
Cleethorpes	71	2,669	954	569	410	560	912	845	1,667	1,661	572
East Yorkshire	716	2,018	1,116	n/a	714	883	690	1,436	1,969	n/a	1,314
Glanford	910	1,236	774	725	936	770	474	829	1,201	1,237	613
Great Grimsby	64	1,128	2,300	956	1,093	893	1,288	1,380	2,535	3,105	n/a
Holderness	478	995	880	715	581	472	590	613	1,371	1,165	495
Kingston upon Hull	0	5,927	6,284	6,472	6,069	4,915	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scunthorpe	0	2,702	4,736	1,779	1,199	1,067	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Craven	475	531	603	914	469	466	659	n/a	1,280	1,406	517
Hambleton	16	1,801	2,236	2,008	1,084	815	n/a	n/a	3,265	2,508	1,178
Harrogate	1,470	1,987	3,917	1,782	1,009	1,347	1,534	2,313	3,828	3,192	1,408
Richmondshire	3	1,601	1,236	911	920	432	675	1,027	1,381	2,127	820
Ryedale	882	1,029	1,376	1,028	792	733	1,264	1,352	2,868	2,661	29,157
Scarborough	10	887	n/a	n/a	903	487	n/a	1,705	3,002	4,734	2,340
Selby	936	2,833	2,227	1,451	873	1,171	1,342	1,791	2,660	3,207	1,949
York	708	2,829	3,219	3,309	2,557	2,473	n/a	2,993	6,058	4,435	2,118
Barnsley	0	4,040	18,573	4,565	2,515	2,601	3,445	4,165	5,013	9,147	8,213
Doncaster	491	10,750	23,783	n/a	4,753	3,869	3,447	5,131	7,819	19,752	8,183
Rotherham	48	12,564	18,937	9,500	4,786	4,219	4,664	5,323	5,881	11,603	8,105
Sheffield	192	3,979	16,141	7,937	6,727	8,594	8,893	16,394	23,959	42,893	20,724
Bradford	7,630	3,243	4,448	3,520	3,155	3,105	n/a	n/a	n/a	15,756	11,580
Calderdale	3,310	2,388	1,493	1,255	1,568	1,469	1,567	1,753	3,128	3,694	2,741
Kirklees	4,171	3,647	3,614	1,782	2,596	3,040	n/a	n/a	n/a	12,808	15,209
Leeds	3,671	4,974	n/a	9,546	8,495	8,203	n/a	n/a	16,505	38,669	28,559
Wakefield	2	8,497	13,119	5,150	4,168	4,112	5,004	5,837	9,852	17,861	10,670

[1] Figures shown are as reported by individual authorities.
n/a indicates that no data is available.

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following the publication of his Department's consultative document, "Draft guidance on the fitness standards for houses in multiple occupation."

Mr. Yeo: The Department has received 16 responses, nine of which were from individual local housing authorities, with the remainder from landlords' or tenants' organisations, professional bodies and others. The responses are all broadly supportive of the line taken by the Department and points of detail are being taken into account in preparing the final version.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total figure held by each district authority in Yorkshire and Humberside in capital receipts from the sale of council houses for *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* the total held at the end of the first financial quarter for the current year.

Mr. Yeo: The total of usable capital receipts held by each authority at 31 March 1991 is given in the table. Capital receipts held from the sale of council houses are not separately identifiable. Data on the stock of receipts are collected on an annual basis only.

Usuable receipts held at 31 March 1991[1]

	Thousands
Barnsley	0
Doncaster	0
Rotherham	6,641
Sheffield	44
Bradford	4,306
Calderdale	2
Kirklees	348
Leeds	0
Wakefield	493
Beverley	514
Boothferry	2,676
Cleethorpes	1,128
Glanford	0
Great Grimsby	1,069
Holderness	754
Kingston-upon-Hull	12,785
East Yorkshire	2,125
Scunthorpe	3,962
Craven	1,155
Hambleton	0
Harrogate	3,193
Richmondshire	376
Ryedale	7,200
Scarborough	0
Selby	2,115
York	2,604

[1] Latest available information.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce a decision on the application by South Cambridgeshire district council for designated status under the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Yeo: I am considering the application very carefully. I hope to announce the decision shortly and will write to my hon. Friend.

Homosexuality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all legal actions that have been taken against local authorities under section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: I am not aware of any legal actions that have been taken against local authorities under section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to monitor the effect on local government practices of section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: While maintaining an overview of how local government legislation operates, my Department does not specifically monitor the effect of section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. I have no plans to amend the section.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: Since section 28 came into force my Department has received some 126 representations about the section.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to amend section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: No.

River Ribble (Radioactive Contamination)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measurements are made of radioactive contamination of the River Ribble in Preston; and what have been the most recent measurements.

Mr. Baldry: Levels of radioactivity in the River Ribble are monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, by my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and British Nuclear Fuels plc. The most recent results are published in the inspectorate's "Environmental Monitoring Programme Report for 1989 on the environmental impact of authorised discharges of radioactive wastes in England and Wales" and the Ministry's "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report Number 23, Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles, 1989", both of which are available in the Library of the House. British Nuclear Fuels also publishes results in an annual report entitled "Radioactive Discharges and Monitoring of the Environment", the most recent of which is for 1990.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants from his Department are deployed on work relating to the East Thames corridor project.

Sir George Young: A core team of eight civil servants is being established to deal with work related to the East Thames corridor and the Department's interests in the channel tunnel rail link. They will be supported by consultants, who will be appointed shortly. Staff in relevant policy divisions and in the London, Eastern and South Eastern regional offices of the Department will also contribute part of their time to this work.

Whale (Export)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances his Department recently authorised the export of an orcinus orca, known as Winnie, from Windsor safari park to Seaworld, Orlando, Florida.

Mr. Baldry: My Department permitted export in accordance with the provisions of EC regulation 3626/82, which implements the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora within the European Community.

The joint Nature Conservation Committee confirmed that export would not be detrimental to the survival of the species and we were satisfied that the other conditions specified in article III of the convention had been met.

City Challenge

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the total bids received from local authorities under the city challenge initiative; and what criteria he uses to make choices on the distribution of resources.

Mr. Key: In May 1991 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment invited 15 local authorities to bid for resources under the first, pilot round of the city challenge initiative: Barnsley, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Lewisham, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Nottingham, Salford, Sheffield, Tower Hamlets, Wirral and Wolverhampton. Barnsley was invited to work together with Doncaster and Rotherham in the preparation of a joint bid covering the Dearne Valley. In addition to the 15 invited authorities, six others submitted bids: Coventry, Newham, Sandwell, St. Helen's, Stockton and Sunderland.

In July 1991 the Secretary of State announced that 11 authorities would be invited to work up their bids into five-year action plans for their areas: Bradford, Barnsley (with Doncaster and Rotherham), Lewisham, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Nottingham, Tower Hamlets, Wirral and Wolverhampton.

Subject to the preparation of satisfactory action plans and the availability of resources, the Government intend to commit £82·5 million in resources to these areas over five years starting in 1992-93.

The criteria used in making choices on the distribution of resources include assessments of the needs of urban areas and their potential for regeneration, the quality of the bids received, the subsequent preparation of satisfactory action plans and the capacity of local authorities and their partners in city challenge effectively to implement the action plans.

Community Charge (Refugees)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an estimate of the cost to individual community charge payers in the London borough of Hillingdon of administration, accommodation and all other related expenses arising from the care of refugees arriving in the borough during the current financial year.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to take account of expenditure by local authorities, including major ports of entry within their area, on administration, accommodation and all other related expenditure arising from the care of refugees.

Mr. Key: It is my right hon. Friend's policy, in making the annual local authority finance settlement, to take account of all expenditure by local authorities which is notified to him.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants from his Department are seconded to the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Portillo: Two.

Local Council Meetings

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will use his powers under section 20 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to ensure that local authority members have the right to have their votes recorded at the conclusion of meetings.

Mr. Key: It is important that members should be able to put on record their support, or otherwise, for questions decided at meetings.

My Department is today consulting the English and Welsh local authority associations on draft regulations which will include a requirement for all county, district and London borough councils to adopt a standing order giving any member the right to have their votes recorded in the minutes at the conclusion of meetings.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities announced on 22 May that these regulations will also provide for compulsory standing orders on the appointment and dismissal of chief officers and a number of minor procedural matters.

Sir Peter Levene

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of remuneration and other benefits offered to Sir Peter Levene (i) as special adviser to his Department and (ii) as chairman of the docklands light railway.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Sir Peter Levene receives no remuneration or other benefits as my special adviser. He has been appointed chairman of the docklands light railway by the board of London Regional Transport whose responsibility it is to agree his remuneration.

Endangered Species

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what notice was given to United Kingdom importers of species covered by CITES on each of the last three occasions when the import of such species was banned in the EC;

(2) when he expects to receive the up-to-date list of CITES appendix C2 species detailing the range states for each species and the current EC position with regard to import; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when and by what means British importers of reptile species from Indonesia were informed of the decision by the EC CITES committee to instigate a ban on imports of such species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* We give general information to importers about changes as quickly as possible. Whenever individual traders have been identified, they have been notified in advance of the issue of general notification. General notification has been by way of a revised list, produced by the European Commission, of all species subject to restrictions of this kind. Such revisions were sent to all known United Kingdom traders on 30 April and 26 September. My Department will circulate a further revision reflecting the decisions taken at the meeting on 23 and 24 September as soon as is available. I understand that this is likely to be after the December meeting of the EC CITES committee. Given this delay, we proposed to notify all known traders of the changes made in September within the next few days.

Written notification of the restrictions on trade with Indonesia was sent to one company in October, in response to a related inquiry. Departmental officials have since met representatives of the British Leather Confederation and the principal importers.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those species covered by CITES whose import is banned into the EC only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to press for a worldwide ban on exports from Indonesia of reptile species listed in appendix C2 of CITES; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Future action will depend on how constructively the Indonesian authorities respond to the EC CITES committee's decision to impose a temporary ban on the import of annex C2 species into the European Community.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which officials represented the United Kingdom at the EC CITES committee meeting on 23 and 24 September 1991; at what civil service grades they are each employed; how long each has been working in the policy area concerned with CITES; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the minutes from the EC CITES committee meeting which took place on 23 and 24 September 1991;

(3) what procedure has been agreed by member states governing the confidentiality of the minutes of the EC CITES committee.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* The United Kingdom was represented by: one grade 6 official from my Department; one grade 7 from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; a senior scientific officer from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; and a higher scientific officer from the royal botanical gardens. All members of the United Kingdom team have had extensive experience of CITES.

The commission does not produce a detailed record of the discussions at EC committee meetings. A summary of the main decisions reached is circulated to member states, but these summaries are not public documents, and are regarded by the Commission as confidential.

PRIME MINISTER

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Ministers have made an official visit to Cyprus since June 1987.

The Prime Minister: There have been no bilateral ministerial visits to Cyprus in the period specified.

Perisher Submarines

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will intervene to stop the Perisher submarine exercise scheduled for 22 to 27 November in the Clyde following fishermen's organisations warnings.

The Prime Minister: I understand the sensitivity of the anniversary of the Antares sinking on 22 November. In recognition of this, no submarines on the essential Perisher exercise will enter inshore waters until Saturday 23 November when no fishing activity will be taking place.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of official entertainment associated with the office of Prime Minister in the financial year 1990-91.

The Prime Minister: The cost of official entertainment associated with my office during 1990-91, including entertainment overseas, was £23,830.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 21 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Parents Charter

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what methods are being used to distribute a copy of the parents charter to every parent; what is the estimated cost of *(a)* preparing the text, *(b)* printing and *(c)* distributing the charter; how many copies have been printed; by what process commercial firms used to distribute the charter were selected; which companies were appointed; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Eggar: Schools have been asked, on a voluntary basis, to distribute the charter to parents. Copies are also available in main libraries and post offices, and could be ordered via a freepost address or freephone number which were advertised in the national press and magazines in September and October.

The cost of preparing the text for publication was some £21,000. Printing costs have so far amounted to £446,000, and distribution costs to £550,000. Nearly 6·8 million copies of the charter have been printed, including 281,000 translated into eight ethnic minority languages. The Central Office of Information was commissioned to manage the distribution arrangements, at a cost to date of nearly £4,000. It selected the mailing house, Mail Marketing (Bristol) Ltd., and telephone agency, Merit Direct Ltd., from an approved list of contractors.

Adult Education

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the component for adult education included in the standard spending assessment for each local education authority for the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Standard spending assessments replaced grant-related expenditure—(GRE)—assessments from April 1990. GRE components for adult education for each local education authority for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are listed in "Technical Handbook of Grant-Related Expenditure" for the relevant year published by the Department of the Environment. Copies are available in the Library. Standard spending assessments do not contain a separate component for adult education.

ENERGY

Nuclear Electricity

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the value expressed in real terms from a 1991 base of the plutonium credit (per kilogram) for the plutonium produced as a by-product of the production of nuclear electricity in the years 1991, 1990, 1985, 1980, 1975, 1970, 1965 and 1961.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As with other nuclear fuels held in stock, it is for each owner of plutonium to attach a value to the material in drawing up its accounts and to justify that value to its auditors. The precise figures are therefore commercial matters for Nuclear Electric plc, Scottish Nuclear Ltd., British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet received any recommendations from the Energy Action Grants Agency with regard to the future operation of the home energy efficiency scheme in Scottish area 14; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following consultation with interested bodies, the Energy Action Grants Agency—EAGA—made recommendations to me that network installer area 14 in Scotland should be divided into four smaller areas. These are: Highlands, Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, the boundaries being those of the relevant local authorities. I understand that the present network installer for the area agreed to step down in order that a new bidding process could take place. In September the EAGA placed advertisements inviting bids by 1 November for registration as network installers in these areas. A total of 11 bids were received, and these are currently being assessed with the aim of enabling successful bidders to be registered before the end of December.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has any policy guidelines on the burning of Orimulsion for the generation of electricity; what information he has on its current use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The type and quantity of fuel used by the electricity generators is an operational matter for the companies concerned, subject to emission limits imposed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Orimulsion is currently being burnt by PowerGen plc, with the agreement of HMIP under SI 318, at its Ince and Richborough power stations on a long-term trial basis.

Thermal Efficiency

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the relative thermal efficiency of *(a)* combined cycle gas power plants and *(b)* combined heat and power plants; and if he will publish a table showing the approximate range of thermal efficiency achieved by plants using both types of power generators.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Modern combined cycle gas turbine electricity generating stations of the type planned currently have a thermal efficiency of about 48 per cent., although future plants are expected to offer improvements on this, possibly reaching 54 per cent. in the next five years.

Combined heat and power plants are usualy tailored to meet the particular combination of heat and electricity loads of individual customers, and can be almost any size and combination of type of equipment and fuel. Therefore it is not possible to generalise but efficiencies are normally in the range of 70 to 80 per cent. but can be as high as 90 per cent.

Ratcliffe Power Station

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the amount of limestone which will be required for the flue gas desulphurisation programme at Ratcliffe power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the environmental statement which accompanied PowerGen plc's application for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 the company stated that the flue gas desulphurisation plant at Ratcliffe would use some 306,000 tonnes of limestone annually.

Research Expenditure

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year from 1979-80 to 1992-93 inclusive the spending or proposed spending on renewables research funded by his Department breaking the figures down into type of renewable technology and expressing all the figures in (i) money terms and (ii) 1991-92 real terms.

Mr. Wakeham: Outturn expenditure from 1979-80 on my Department's renewable energy research, development and demonstration programme is set out in tables. Expenditure for the current year is estimated. Proposed expenditure on renewables in 1992-93 is £24·3 million; a breakdown of this figure by type of renewable technology is not yet available.

Department of Energy RD and D Expenditure on Renewable Energy

£ million

Programme	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Wind	0·6	0·8	0·9	2·5	2·5	4·8	5·4	3·7	4	3·9	4·8	4·5	6·2
Wave	3	3·3	4·4	3·1	1	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·4	0·5
Geothermal Aquifers	1·3	1·7	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·1	0·3	0·1	0	0·1	0·2	0	0·1
Geothermal HDR	0	0·6	5·6	3	2·9	4·6	3·5	3·5	3·6	3·5	3·3	2·6	1·8
Solar	1·2	0·9	0·7	1·4	0·9	0·5	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·4	1·9	2·1	2·3
Biomass[1]	0·1	0·4	0·4	1·2	0·7	1·1	0·8	1·3	2·2	1·5	1·4	1·8	2·3
Tide	0·6	1·4	0·4	0	0	0·3	0·1	0·1	1·4	1·2	1·1	1·9	2·0
Hydro/General Studies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·8	0·8	0·8	1·0	1·5
Technology Transfer/ Promotion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·7	1	1·6	2·7	3·0
ETSU Services	1·4	2·2	2·3	2	1·9	2·1	2	2·3	2·3	2·5	2·7	3·8	4·3
Total	8·2	11·3	17·3	14·7	11·7	14·9	13·2	12·0	16·3	16	17·9	20·8	24·0

[1] Includes expenditure on "Waste as a Fuel" projects under the Energy Efficiency Office demonstration scheme

Notes:

Up to 1986-87 the total for R&D also includes expenditure on Low Head Hydro and General Studies to 1986-87. These are separately identified

for 1987-88 and include work carried out by the Chief Scientist Group, ETSU.

Department of Energy RD and D Expenditure on Renewable Energy (1991-92 prices)

£ million

Programme	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Wind	1·4	1·6	1·6	4·2	4·0	7·4	7·8	5·2	5·3	4·8	5·6	4·8	6·2
Wave	7·0	6·5	7·9	5·2	1·6	0·6	0·6	0·1	0·3	0·1	0·1	0·4	0·5
Geothermal Aquifers	3·0	3·3	4·7	2·5	2·9	1·7	0·4	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·2	0·0	0·1
Geothermal HDR	0·0	1·2	10·0	5·0	4·6	7·0	5·0	4·9	4·8	4·3	3·8	2·8	1·8
Solar	2·8	1·8	1·3	2·3	1·4	0·7	1·0	1·3	1·5	1·7	2·2	2·3	2·3
Biomass[1]	0·2	0·8	0·7	2·0	1·1	1·7	1·2	1·8	2·9	1·9	1·6	1·9	2·3
Tide	1·4	2·7	0·7	0·0	0·0	0·4	0·1	0·1	1·9	1·5	1·3	2·0	2·0
Hydro/General Studies/ CSG	—	—	—	—	—		—	—	1·0	1·0	0·9	1·1	1·5

Programme	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Technology Transfer/ Promotion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·9	1·2	2·0	2·9	3·0
ETSU Services	3·3	4·3	4·1	3·3	3·0	3·2	2·9	3·2	3·0	3·1	3·1	4·0	4·3
Total	19·1	22·2	31·0	24·5	18·6	22·7	19·0	16·7	21·6	19·7	20·8	22·2	24·0

[1] Includes expenditure on "Waste as a Fuel" projects under the EEO's demonstration scheme
Notes:
CSG = Chief Scientist's Group
Up to 1986-87 the total for R&D includes expenditure on Low Head Hydro and General Studies

IAEA Inspection

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the countries currently subject to International Atomic Energy Agency inspection.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The International Atomic Energy Agency is entitled to inspect the declared facilities of a country with which it has concluded a safeguards agreement. A list of those agreements, as of 31 December 1990, is contained in the agency's annual report for 1990, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Offshore Supplies Office

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what changes he expects to make in the future operation of the Offshore Supplies Office.

Mr. Wakeham: I have reviewed the future role of the Offshore Supplies Office—OSO—in the light of the present stage of development of the offshore supplies industry and the challenges facing it in the 1990s. The OSO's principal tasks will remain unchanged—promotion of fair commercial opportunity in all oil and gas markets, support for the development of the latest technologies and promotion of United Kingdom exports. It will have a major role in supporting EC initiatives for the creation of open and commercially fair markets. Open and commercially fair markets are crucial to the continued success of the United Kingdom offshore oil and gas field supplies industry. That industry is now mature, however, and firmly established at home. I take the view, therefore, that the detailed monitoring of orders for the United Kingdom continental shelf is no longer necessary and that the OSO should no longer be charged with this task. I shall continue to report to Parliament, in my annual report on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, on the progress of the supplies industry. But I plan to give new emphasis to its success in overseas markets, in place of the present analysis of orders placed for the United Kingdom Continental Shelf.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Refugees

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many child refugees under the age of 17 years have been admitted to the United Kingdom during each of the past 12 months; if he will provide a table showing their country or origin; and what financial support the Home Office provides for the care and resettlement of child refugees in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the United Kingdom who are granted temporary admission pending consideration of their application. The available information is on those cases who were unaccompanied at the point of their arrival, and is given in the table.

In addition to providing grants to certain voluntary organisations to assist with refugee resettlement, the Home Office makes a grant—about £600,000 in 1991—to the refugees arrivals project which provides emergency assistance to newly arrived destitute asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors. I understand that under the Children Act 1989 local authorities are responsible for arranging the care of unaccompanied child refugees or asylum seekers.

Unaccompanied[1] minors[2] seeking asylum on their arrival in the United Kingdom, and granted temporary admission, by nationality

	1990		1991									
	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Afghanistan	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Angola	1	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	1	—	—
Bangladesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Ethiopia	4	3	—	2	1	1	2	3	1	—	—	—
Ghana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Iran	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somalia	2	—	2	2	—	—	1	1	1	4	—	4
Sri Lanka	7	1	8	2	2	6	9	4	4	4	9	9
Turkey	—	—	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1
Uganda	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Zaire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
TOTAL	16	5	12	8	3	10	15	8	8	12	10	15

[1] Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival.
[2] Aged 16 or under.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of crimes committed in each police area in 1979 and in 1990 with the percentage change given in each case.

Mr. John [illegible]: This information is published annually in chapter 2 of the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" the latest edition of which, Cm 1322, contains 1989 statistics. 1990 figures were published in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin No. 4/91" in March 1991. Both publications have been placed in the Library of the House.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information the governor of Brixton prison was given about Staffordshire police operations in Brixton prison during 1990 and 1991;

(2) what consultations took place in 1990 between the Prison Department, the Metropolitan police and the Staffordshire police about police operations in Brixton prison.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As I indicated in my statement of 5 August following the report of the inquiry by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons into the escape, information became available to Prison Service headquarters and to Brixton prison from the police in February 1991 that the prisoners were seeking to escape, that they had identified the Sunday chapel service as an opportunity and that they were seeking to acquire a firearm. This information was not passed to Ministers.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if the last governor of Brixton prison will be given the opportunity to answer charges made directly or indirectly against him;

(2) if any employees at the Prison Department will be disciplined following investigations into the Brixton prison escape in July of two IRA suspects.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced on 5 August that Mr. Ralph Shuffrey CB has been asked to advise the principal establishment officer of the Home Office and the Director General of the Prison Service on whether there were any grounds for taking disciplinary action against any member of staff in connection with the escape from Brixton prison on 7 July. Mr. Shuffrey, who was assisted by Mr. John Richardson OBE, subsequently advised that there were such grounds in relation to the then head of DOC1 division in Prison Service headquarters, the then governor of Brixton and four prison officers who were on duty at the time.

Because of his retirement, the question of disciplinary action against the then governor of Brixton did not arise and no charges were laid against him. The position was explained to him and he was told that it was open to him to write to the director of personnel and finance of the Prison Service with his comments. A disciplinary charge was laid against the then head of DOC1 division. The disciplinary proceedings found that there had been errors of judgment and failures of procedure, but the charge was not sustained and was dismissed. In the case of the prison officers, an investigation was conducted under the code of discipline for prison officers, in the light of which the governor of Brixton decided that no charges should be laid.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in apprehending the two IRA suspects who escaped from Her Majesty's prison, Brixton last July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that investigations are continuing.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how a loaded 2·5 calibre pistol was smuggled into Brixton gaol between February and July 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: These matters were inquired into by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, parts of whose report on the escape of two prisoners from Brixton prison on 7 July were published on 5 August. Copies were placed in the Library along with copies of my statement of the same date. In his report Her Majesty's chief inspector said that most probably the gun was sent in by post, in the cut-out soles of a pair of shoes, the body of the gun in one shoe, the magazine in the other.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Staffordshire about Staffordshire police operations in Brixton prison during 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I called for a report from the chief constable of Staffordshire on 6 August after I had received the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons into the Brixton escape on 7 July. The chief constable's report was submitted on 13 August, and a supplementary report on 5 September. The chief constable has arranged for a further investigation by Mr. Colin Bailey, the deputy chief constable of Nottinghamshire, as announced yesterday into allegations made in the "Thames Reports" programme broadcast on 19 November.

Mrs. Jamila Sadiq

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will take a decision over the application of Mrs. Jamila Sadiq (Ref. IMP 5767465(S)) (GV100/12157) to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The entry clearance officer in Islamabad was notified on 20 November of the decision to refuse the application. I regret the delay in dealing with this application, which was first referred to the Home Office in April 1991.

"As Safe as Houses"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken on the recommendations of the Fire Brigades Union report, "As Safe as Houses", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The discussion document was submitted for consideration to the Central Fire Brigades

Advisory Council at its meeting of 20 November. The Home Office will consider its response to the document in the light of advice from that forum.

Vagrancy Act 1824

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake to bring forward proposals to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Mr. John Patten: No. The Vagrancy Act 1824 has been much amended over the years and in its present form provides power to deal with a number of nuisances, including indecent exposure.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had in connection with the number of homeless persons arrested under the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on 13 November 1991 at column *537*.

Prison Security

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the recent prison security audit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend recently received the final report of the prison security audit conducted by Mr. Hadfield and Mr. Lakes and is still considering it.

Fire Safety

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when section 3 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 will be enacted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are no plans to bring section 3 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 into force.

Private living accommodation is a matter best left to local housing authorities. They have a duty at least once a year to consider the housing conditions in their district with a view to determining what action to take in performance of their functions.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to protect elderly persons from fire risks.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office provides specific advice on fire safety for elderly people in the form of written and video material. That material provides general guidance on fire prevention and fire safety measures in the home and is targeted to the elderly age group.

In addition, the Home Office targeted its 1990-91 national television advertising campaign on smoke alarms at the elderly. The main target group for the 1991-92 campaign will again be the elderly.

There is legislation in place in respect of types of accommodation housing elderly people which, among other things, makes provision for fire precautions. Such legislation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Special Branch

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has authorised any special branch operations in British gaols since he took office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is not the practice to disclose such information.

Drugs

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of drugs seized in the United Kingdom are seized at the frontier; and what percentage comes from other member states of the European Community.

Mr. John Patten: About 65 per cent. by weight of drugs seized in 1990 were seized at ports by HM Customs and some 60 per cent. by weight of all customs seizures came through other member states of the European Community.

Terrorist Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the present number of Irish *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons for terrorist activities committed in the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the prison category of Irish *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons in England and Wales for terrorist activities.

Mrs. Rumbold: As at 19 November 1991, the numbers of men and women held in prisons in England and Wales for terrorist-related offences committed in the United Kingdom who have given the Irish Republic as their place of birth were nine and one respectively. All these prisoners are in category A.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department of the inmates who have escaped from prisons in the United Kingdom during the current year, how many escaped from *(a)* closed establishments and *(b)* open establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: From 1 January 1991 to 18 November 1991 a total of 270 prisoners escaped from closed prison establishments in England and Wales. In the same period, two prisoners escaped from open establishments in England and Wales. Prison matters elsewhere in the United Kingdom are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

A further 279 prisoners absconded from closed establishments and 1,022 from open establishments in England and Wales during the same period. Absconding in this context means unlawfully gaining liberty by abusing trust without having to overcome a security barrier or specific supervision.

Prison Officers (Shifts)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent change in prison officers' shift patterns have taken place at Castington youth training

centre; what changes there have been to visiting on Mondays and Fridays; and what effect the new shift patterns have had on the number of meals taken in cells.

Mrs. Rumbold: New shift systems, designed to make more efficient use of staff resources, were introduced on 13 October 1991. As a general rule visits are not now held on Mondays and Fridays, because neither day was popular with visitors. Inmates dine in association, but breakfast and tea meals are now taken in cells. This has enabled an earlier start to evening association, which is preferred by inmates.

Animal Rights

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the animal rights national index; how many names are contained in this index; and in what year it was created.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The animal rights national index —ARNI—was created in 1986 and it holds about 21,000 names. The data held by ARNI are used to assist the police in their investigations into acts of animal extremism and also to provide advice and guidance to those who may be at risk from such acts.

Electoral Registration

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list those newspapers, magazines and periodicals in which the Government have placed advertisements aimed at encouraging electoral registration in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing what the Government have spent in the last year promoting the use of postal and proxy voting in each parliamentary constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The annual electoral registration advertising campaign in England and Wales this year used national poster sites only; no advertisements were placed in newspapers, magazines or periodicals. In a smaller, separate campaign designed to help teachers to encourage young people to register, advertisements were placed in *The Times Educational Supplement, Educational Guardian, Telegraph Education* and *Teachers Weekly*.

A total of £14,500 has been spent in England and Wales on a leaflet and poster on absent voting. It is not possible to break this figure down by parliamentary constituency.

Police Statistics

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by police authority in England *(a)* the number of police officers who would have been lost to force establishments if the 1991-92 budget reductions had fallen entirely on manpower and *(b)* the actual number of police officers it is planned to reduce the force establishments by in that year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is for police authorities to set force budgets and determine police strength. I am aware that some authorities set budgets for 1991-92 on a basis likely to result in the strength of the police force falling below the establishment which I had approved: Merseyside by 100 officers, Northumbria by 116, West Yorkshire by around 200, and Derbyshire by a cumulative figure of 130.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will show the marginal cost of every extra 10 police officers in West Yorkshire above the present establishment for the poll tax payers of Leeds, taking into account the impact of charge capping on the West Yorkshire police authority budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information can be provided only by the West Yorkshire police authority.

Child Protection

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department has given to the project pilot schemes completed in September on "Protection of Children Disclosure of Criminal Background for the Voluntary Sector", in accordance with his Department's guidelines 58/1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has received and considered a report from an independent researcher which evaluates the pilot schemes. The report is due to be published by the Volunteer Centre UK early next year. In response to the Home Office scrutiny of criminal records, the Government have announced their intention to publish a consultation paper towards the end of next year outlining their proposals for new arrangements for disclosing information from the criminal record.

Prisoners (Mail)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria he uses to determine which penal establishments have outgoing mail from prisoners routinely read; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold My right hon. Friend announced on publication of the Woolf report that routine reading of prisoners' mail would be abolished save in dispersal prisons and for certain other limited categories of prisoners. A copy of circular instruction CI 10/1991, which gave effect to this, is in the Library. The circular instruction also sets out the circumstances in which the governor may reinstitute routine reading for a temporary period.

Bail Offenders

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent studies he has considered of the percentage of crime which is committed by people on bail; if he will fund ongoing national research into this problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 13 November 1991 at column *535*.

SCOTLAND

Trunk Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the planned expenditure on *(a)* new construction and improvement,

(b) structural maintenance and *(c)* current maintenance on trunk roads by his Department for the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Decisions on forward spending plans for individual programmes within the Scottish block have still to be finalised. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as the information is available.

Housing Statistics

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of *(a)* sheltered and *(b)* special needs housing built by (i) district councils, (ii) Scottish Homes or its predecessor, (iii) housing associations and (iv) the private sector, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on housebuilding by user category is not available for the years prior to 1986, and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. The latest available information on sheltered and special needs housing built by district councils and the private sector is set out in the tables. Information on Scottish Homes, and its predecessor, and on housing associations, is not available in the precise form requested. I will write to the hon. Member about this.

Sheltered Housing[1]—Dwellings Completed[2] 1986-1990

	Numbers
1986	
Private Sector	415
District Councils	273
1987	
Private Sector	744
District Councils	321
1988	
Private Sector	255
District Councils	312
1989	
Private Sector	237
District Councils[3]	330
1990	
Private Sector[3]	92
District Councils[3]	207

[1] Includes sheltered wheelchair housing
[2] Excluding housing associations
[3] Returns are incomplete

Special needs housing[1]: Dwellings completed[2] 1986 to 1990

	Numbers
1986	
Private sector	—
District councils	267
1987	
Private sector	36
District councils	271
1988	
Private sector	4
District councils	320
1989	
Private sector	17
District councils[3]	168
1990	
Private sector[3]	48
District councils[3]	87

[1] Includes amenity, wheelchair and ambulant disabled housing.
[2] Excluding housing associations.
[3] Returns are incomplete.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what alternative means of disposal for sewage sludge in Scotland will be available when dumping at sea ceases.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Disposal options will include agricultural land, forestry, landfill, incineration and composting.

Water Supply (Lead)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the water authorities' assessment of lead in water supply zones to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Water authorities have given undertakings to my right hon. Friend that their assessments of water supply zones where there is a risk that the United Kingdom standard for lead in water may not always be met will be completed by 31 December 1991. Where a need for further treatment to comply with the regulations is identified authorities will be required to undertake the necessary improvements within specified time scales.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of water supply disconnections over the latest available 12-month period for each regional authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Supplies to domestic consumers in Scotland may be disconnected only for short-term operational reasons, for example to undertake repairs, make connections or plumbing alterations. Supplies to non-domestic consumers may also be disconnected for other reasons, including those arising from non-payment of water charges. Information on the number of disconnections is not held centrally.

Cumbernauld High School

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth on 11 November, *Official Report*, column *381*, when he will publish the follow-up report on Cumbernauld high school undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools in January 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* At present reports of follow-up inspections are not published although such reports are likely to be published in future following the implementation of the parents charter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Libya (Contracts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance he is providing to British businesses to try to obtain contracts in connection with *(a)* the great manmade river project and *(b)* the Melita power station in Libya.

Mr. Lilley: None. We have neither encouraged nor discouraged British companies which wish to trade with Libya. This has been a matter for their commercial judgment alone.

Blue Arrow

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what date his Department sold copies of his inspector's report on Blue Arrow; and how much money was made as a result of these sales;

(2) how much it cost his Department to recover copies of the inspector's report on Blue Arrow after they had been sold to members of the public;

(3) for what reason his Department *(a)* sold certain copies of the DTI inspector's report on Blue Arrow and *(b)* decided not to publish the report.

Mr. Lilley: My Department supplied copies of the report on 7 and 8 November to a number of people who might be affected by it, against written undertakings of confidentiality from their solicitors. This was done in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 1985 "on request and on payment of the prescribed fee".
The cost of recovering the reports from recipients was negligible.

I have discretion to furnish copies of reports to persons who might be affected by it in order to give them an opportunity to make representations to me about publication of the report. In the light of representations made to me, I have decided to delay publication.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration was given to the effect on the continuing trial involving the financial advisers of Blue Arrow before the decision was taken to release details of an investigation on one aspect of Blue Arrow's affairs.

Mr. Lilley: Full consideration, including the taking of legal advice. Details have been given in confidence only to persons whose interests might be affected by the report.

Independent Financial Sector

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to encourage the independent financial sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The provision of independent financial advice is one of the matters currently being considered by the Securities and Investments Board in its review of retail regulation.

The Government are keen to see a wide range of suitable independent advice available in the marketplace through independent financial advisers and others.

European Space Agency

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Space Agency's ministerial council meeting held on 18 to 20 November in Munich.

Mr. Leigh: The main achievement of the European Space Agency—ESA—council meeting at ministerial level, held in Munich, was to initiate a new ESA programme for the observation of the Earth and its environment from polar orbit, known as the first polar mission.

Ministers also agreed to continue development of ESA's Columbus programme, of the Hermes manned spaceplane, and of a data relay satellite, within a slightly reduced budget, during 1992. They will meet again late in 1992 to review the future direction of the programmes approved at Munich.

The new Earth observation programme will develop advanced instruments in support of climate research and the monitoring of global climate. It will also support the flight of operational meteorological instruments and will carry forward radar-based remote sensing using synthetic aperture radar. In addition, the programme will address the necessary facilities for data reception and distribution on the ground.

The instruments are scheduled to be flown in 1998 on the polar platform, which is under development within ESA's Columbus programme. The United Kingdom played a prominent role at the council in urging ESA member states to give a decisive impetus to this new Earth observation and environment programme. The programme represents a positive European contribution to worldwide efforts to understand the global environment. This is a matter of central importance to current international discussions and negotiations including the forthcoming United Nations conference on environment and development, in Rio de Janiero next year.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will show the value of output per hour in the manufacturing sector *(a)* at 1991 prices and *(b)* the percentage change year on year from 1961.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available in the form requested. Estimates of output per hour in the manufacturing sector are available, in index numbers at constant 1985 prices, for years from 1970. These are held as series DMBH on the Central Statistical Office database which can be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Cardiff Airport

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the level of Customs and Excise personnel at Cardiff international airport;

(2) how many full-time customs officers were deployed at Cardiff international airport in each year since 1985; and how many are deployed now;

(3) what level of centrally funded resources is deployed at Cardiff international airport to deter and detect drug smuggling; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Resources are centrally funded to individual executive units, but the allocation of those resources is a matter for the head of the executive unit. In the allocation process full account is taken of the varying degrees of risk that occur in the ports and airports within the boundaries of the executive unit.

Since 1985 the following numbers of full-time customs officers have been deployed at Cardiff international airport:

	Number
1985	16
1986-87	16
1988	17
1989-90	17

The numbers include staff employed on both anti-smuggling and fiscal work. They also reflect additional staff years to cover peak seasonal periods as well as the perceived need, at that time, to staff on a continuous basis rather than effort being targeted according to risk.

Following the national review of anti-smuggling controls which has taken place within the Customs and Excise Department, improvements are being made which involve a shift away from predictable static controls to a more mobile, flexible effort directed at areas of greatest risk as perceived at any given time. These risks are assessed within the executive unit on a wider base than Cardiff international airport alone.

As part of the process of greater flexibility, customs staff for the locality are now concentrated in premises at Barry docks and cover Cardiff and Barry docks as well as the airport. There is a total of 20 full-time anti-smuggling staff available and these can be supplemented by additional resources from elsewhere in the executive unit as the need arises. In addition 16 full-time staff are employed on customs fiscal work in the locality.

Car Allowances

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the conditions under which *(a)* volunteer hospital drivers and *(b)* hon. Members are taxed on notional profits on car allowances.

Mr. Maude: The position in law is that motor mileage allowances paid to individuals, whether employees or office holders, or volunteer hospital drivers, are liable to income tax if the allowances exceed the costs of running and maintaining the car for use for work or office, or for use for driving for a hospital car service. The tax liability arises under schedule E, employees and office holders, and schedule D, volunteer hospital drivers.

Hon. Members, like other office holders or employees, may use a simplified administrative arrangement, known as the fixed profit car scheme, under which "tax free" rates calculated by the Inland Revenue to reflect typical motoring costs can be set against motor mileage allowances received in order to calculate the taxable profit element. Alternatively, hon. Members can choose to keep detailed records of the actual motoring expenses incurred and the precise parliamentary, constituency and private mileage travelled to enable them to make their own claims for relief.

Volunteer hospital drivers may use simple tables drawn up by the Inland Revenue based on the FPCS arrangements, which are available for employees and office holders, to work out if there is any taxable profit element of their motor mileage allowances. The Revenue has compared the rates of mileage allowances paid by the various health authorities with the "tax free" FPCS rates; the tables show a profit figure where the mileage allowances exceed the FPCS rates. Alternatively, volunteer hospital drivers can choose to keep detailed records of the mileage allowances received, the actual motoring expenses incurred, and the mileage driven privately and for the hospital car service.

Taxpayers Charter

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the omission of a statement informing taxpayers that they will be presumed to have dealt with their tax affairs honestly unless there is reason to believe otherwise, which was contained in the taxpayers charter of 1986, from the taxpayers charter of 1991 constitutes a change in policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Francis Maude: Taxpayers will continue to be presumed to have dealt with their tax affairs honestly unless there is reason to believe otherwise. The omission of a statement to that effect from the 1991 taxpayers charter does not constitute a change of policy in this regard.

Hospital Car Service

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to reply to letters of 20 September, 8 October and 24 October from the hon. Member for South Hams about the taxation of the hospital car service mileage allowance.

Mr. Maude: Letters on this subject were delayed while the Inland Revenue gave consideration to the tax treatment of these allowances. I have now set out the tax treatment and I will reply shortly.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will increase his efforts to ensure civil service relocation is speeded up; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's relocation policy is not centrally directed. Departments are required to review the location of their work regularly and systematically in accordance with clear guidelines. Between 1988 and June 1990 Departments identified nearly 23,000 posts for location or relocation away from the south-east. I hope to update the House shortly on the progress made by the end of June 1991.

Multilateral Surveillance

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to submit the United Kingdom medium-term economic plan to the European Council of Finance Ministers for consideration by the Council in its programme of multilateral surveillance.

Mr. Maude: The Government have submitted the United Kingdom's medium-term convergence programme, based on the medium-term financial strategy and the autumn statement, to the Community. It will be considered by ECOFIN in due course. A copy of the programme has been placed in the Library of the House.

PSBR

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the Treasury rules which determine the construction of, and accounting conventions governing, the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Mellor: The notes to table 2·5 in the Financial Statistics Explanatory Handbook, July 1990 edition, describe how the public sector borrowing requirement is defined and measured. More details are available from further references listed there.

Taxpayers Charter

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers in the United Kingdom fall within the ambit of the taxpayers charter.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The taxpayers charter covers taxpayers dealt with by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise. The Inland Revenue deal with over 30 million taxpayers, including individuals, partnerships, companies and trusts. Customs and Excise deal with around 1·8 million VAT traders, 35,000 excise and inland customs traders and international travellers (some 60 million each year). Some people fall under more than one of these categories.

Child Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the total cost to the Exchequer of raising child benefit to £15 for every child during a full financial year and the gains in taxation revenues made if *(a)* the additional married couple's allowance had not been raised at the last Budget and *(b)* the additional married couple's allowance—additional to single person's allowance—at the last Budget had been reduced by half.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The additional social security expenditure arising from paying child benefit at £15 per week throughout 1991-92 would be about £3·2 billion. The married couple's allowance for those aged under 65 was not changed in the last Budget. The direct revenue yield of reducing the additional allowance by half is estimated to be about £2·3 billion at 1991-92 income levels.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Free School Meals

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children will lose their entitlement to free school meals under the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The amendment to the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity) Regulations 1983 will not now be made and the current definition of employment will remain unchanged. Consequently those refusing work of up to 24 hours a week will not lose their entitlement to unemployment benefit or income support. Thus for those on income support with children, included in this category, there will be no loss of free school meals.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve benefits payable to disabled people in employment who have a reduced work capacity because of their disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In April 1992 the Government will introduce the new disability working allowance. This will be the first benefit in this country specifically intended to help disabled people to work even if their earning capacity is reduced.

National Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking on the actuary's report on the level of the rebate to be paid over the next five-year period on national insurance contributions for those contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 15 November 1991 at column *685*.

Health Screening

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those companies which tendered for the contract for the Department of Social Security health screening programme; what is the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Disclosure of the names of the companies invited to tender for the Department of Social Security health screening programme could cause commercial damage to the unsuccessful tenderers and jeopardise the Department's future relationships with its suppliers. The cost of the three-year contract at current prices and depending upon take-up is estimated to be £4 million.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the BUPA health screening service will visit the Coventry offices of his Department; for how long; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: BUPA mobile screening units will be visiting Department of Social Security offices in Coventry early in December for a period of one or two weeks depending upon take-up.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the criteria which led to the selection of BUPA to provide a health screening programme for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: BUPA was chosen following a competitive tendering exercise to assess the ability of leading health-care providers to deliver the Department's requirements, having particular regard to company infrastructure; financial stability; mechanisms for ensuring quality and integrity of service; logistical planning; standard of mobile screening units; experience of comparable screening programmes; capacity to meet the Department's specification; and overall value for money within available budget.

Young Persons (Benefits)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons aged 16 and 17 years, respectively, received *(a)* unemployment benefit and *(b)* income support in each year after 1987.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is shown in the table.

May	Aged	Number of claimants in receipt of Income Support	Number of claimants in receipt of Unemployment Benefit
1988	16	32,000	1,000
	17	69,000	6,000
1989	16	5,000	—
	17	13,000	—
1990	16	4,000	—
	17	17,000	—

Figures are not yet available for Income Support for 1991.

Notes:

1. Some cases may be receiving both Income Support and Unemployment Benefit.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. From October 1988 Unemployment Benefit was no longer payable to a 16 or 17 year old.

Source: annual statistical enquiry 1988, 1989 and 1990 half-yearly analysis of unemployment claimants (grossed up from a 5 per cent. sample).

Mortgage Support

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the current level of mortgage support expenditure; and what was the comparable situation 12 months previously.

Miss Widdecombe: Help with mortgage interest is given through income support. Estimates of the amounts included in income support assessments for mortgage interest in 1989 and 1990, the latest year for which information is available, are as follows:

	£ million
1989	355
1990	555

Note: Estimates are rounded to the nearest £5 million.
Source: Income support annual statistical enquiries, May 1989 and 1990.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of increasing benefits to cover the 20 per cent. of the poll tax in 1989-90 and 1990-91 and the estimate for 1991-92; and how many people in each year were helped.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	1989	1990	1991
Estimated cost of increasing income-related benefits to cover the 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge (£ million)	£500	£520	£580
Number of income-related benefit cases (million)	7·7	7·5	7·7

Sources: Sources of the caseload information are the housing benefit/community charge benefit management information system, the income support annual statistical enquiry, and the family credit statistical system.

The figures relate to May of each year for income support and housing benefit, and April for family credit. The average caseload for the year may be different due to fluctuations during the year; the caseload and expenditure figures cannot be compared directly because each is derived differently.

WALES

Dental Health

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has now completed his consideration of implementing a new management information system for the community dental service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The development of management information systems for the community dental service is a matter for district health authorities. The Welsh Office has fully funded authorities to purchase equipment for capturing data which will meet the information requirements agreed with chief administrative dental officers and notified to district general managers in February 1991.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of those hospitals providing paediatric emergency dental services staffed by the community dental service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the relationship between the incidence of dental caries and social deprivation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information about the incidence of dental caries in households of different social class is collected and published decennially by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The latest published information is from the 1988 adult dental health survey and the 1983 child dental health survey.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the reports by district health authorities in Wales of the assessment of local dental health needs in their area.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will arrange for copies of the reports of directors of dental public health to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action his Department is taking to reduce the incidence of cross-infection in general dental surgeries.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The incidence of cross-infection in general dental practice surgeries is determined by the quality of hygienic practices undertaken in those surgeries and is the responsibility of the individual general dental practitioners. Where a family health service authority has reason to believe that appropriate infection control is not practised, it may seek an independent inspection and report from an officer of the dental reference service. Many family health service authorities also operate a voluntary inspection for all new practices.

In 1988, with the aid of family health service authorities and the dental profession in Wales, all practices were surveyed by questionnaire on the quality of their infection control arrangements. Where identified as necessary, counselling of practitioners was given by the profession locally.

To ensure appropriate practitioner training in cross-infection and understanding of practice responsibilities:

Guidance has been issued to the profession. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 10 July 1991;

Funding was allocated for equipment to facilitate improved undergraduate and postgraduate training (£605,000 in 1988-89-90 and 1990-91 and £900,000 in 1991-92);

A video on hygienic practice was issued to all general practitioners in Wales in 1989.

In order to pump-prime appropriate equipment purchases in 1989 by general dental practitioners, the forecast outturn for each general dental practitioner in the United Kingdom was uplifted by approximately £1,000 additional to the usual refund of expenses.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of school children aged over five years is maintained schools were inspected by the community dental service in each family health service authority area in Wales in each year since 1971.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on an individual FHSA basis is not available prior to 1976. The available data are given in the following table:

Percentage of school children[1] inspected by Community dental Service

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1976	41	49	64	57	41	65	45	33
1977	41	58	62	60	55	77	44	60
1978	43	67	85	44	63	74	42	56
1979	45	62	65	41	61	65	58	57
1980	61	73	77	34	73	77	55	59
1981	78	77	77	24	84	94	59	59
1982	87	72	68	23	78	78	60	61
1983	77	77	n/a	26	73	88	63	60
1984	70	75	78	46	80	88	60	70
1985	67	74	82	50	73	92	62	79
1986-87	67	89	73	45	69	98	59	89
1987-88	73	73	85	37	64	91	63	86
1988-89	50	63	66	40	63	88	65	90
1989-90	47	59	48	50	62	69	69	90
1990-91	50	67	40	64	52	59	54	79

[1] School children aged over 5 in maintained schools.

The following footnote was omitted from the answer I gave on 22 July (Hansard Vol 195. Col 382) to a similar question from the hon. Gentleman:

"Percentages for the years 1971 to 1975 include re-inspections"

Oro-facial Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has now received the report of the Welsh Dental Committee working party on oro-facial cancer.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of money he has given *(a)* annually and *(b)* by school to the assisted places scheme in each of the years 1984 to 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Payments made to independent schools for fee remissions under the assisted places scheme from 1984-85 to 1991 are shown in the table:

Assisted places scheme: Payment to schools financial years 1984-85 to 1990-91

School	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Christ College, Brecon	48,289·45	62,116·51	95,473·37	131,470·78	155,404·79	189,933·43	244,081·45
Howell's School, Denbigh	96,971·98	132,971·98	179,033·86	225,465·70	243,740·40	237,474·63	231,442·31
Howell's School, Llandaff	144,940·27	209,858·38	274,274·74	314,274·85	243,740·40	334,290·42	358,798·97
Llandovery College	31,013·22	38,279·65	454,407·00	55,732·49	75,308·91	92,650·75	140,381·50
Monmouth School (for Boys)	134,170·47	181,642·40	233,684·75	307,291·19	277,352·49	323,194·26	303,951·04
Monmouth School (for Girls)	52,598·51	68,760·75	90,225·23	109,297·62	114,422·49	128,010·24	140,618·97
Penrhos College, Colwyn Bay	62,843·75	81,089·97	99,399·15	140,459·21	136,944·07	156,617·49	183,500·70
Rydal School, Colwyn Bay	56,864·75	67,768·75	93,274·00	110,254·91	112,767·80	128,121·05	153,508·72
TOTAL	626,876·45	842,488·19	1,519,772·10	1,394,246·75	1,359,681·35	1,589,392·27	1,756,283·66

Sewage Treatment Works, Llanfaes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline his reasons for refusing to exercise his powers under the planning Acts to call in for determination a planning application by Welsh Water to construct a sewage treatment works at Llanfaes, Ynys Mon, Gwynedd.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On the information available to him, my right hon. Friend concluded that this application did not involve planning issues of more than local importance and should be determined by the local planning authority.

Nebulisers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will contact the Welsh health authorities on payments for nebulisers and other health requisites.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our officials have already contacted Welsh district health authorities asking them to

examine their existing policies and practices for the provision of equipment such as nebulisers. In addition, the authorities have been asked to investigate and report on individual cases that have been notified.

Paediatrics

Mr. Allan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new senior registrar posts in paediatrics have been created in Wales this year; at which hospitals they are based; and what arrangements exist for rotation with other areas.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Three new senior registrar posts in paediatrics have been created this year in Wales; two in community paediatrics and one in the regional perinatal intensive care service. All three are located in South Glamorgan hospitals. The rotations involved were decided on the advice of the speciality standing advisory committee and the specialty training committee.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of toxic waste imported into the ports of Wales for the years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and for the first three quarters of 1991 giving the place of origin of the toxins.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Returns on the importation of hazardous waste into the United Kingdom are available only for the period since the introduction of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations in October 1988.

On the basis of information currently available the information requested is as follows:

Date and port with country of origin	*Waste imported Tonnes*	*Total disposed of in Wales Tonnes*	*Percentage*
October 1988—31 March 1989			
Newport			
Ireland	43·0		
TOTAL	43·0	Nil	0
1 April 1989—31 March 1990			
Holyhead			
Ireland	156·2		
Newport			
Austria	73·7		
Germany	108·0		
Ireland	483·2		
Spain	238·5		
Switzerland	423·7		
Swansea			
Greece	5·2		
TOTAL	1,488·5	754·9	51
1 April 1990—31 March 1991			
Holyhead			
Ireland	815·9		
Newport			
Austria	1,914·7		
Germany	167·2		
Finland	10·7		
Ireland	1,547·1		
Switzerland	877·6		
Swansea			
Ireland	10·1		
TOTAL	5,343·3	585·3	11
1 April 1991—30 September 1991			
Holyhead			
Ireland	128·3		
Newport			
Austria	109·3		
Germany	80·7		
Finland	14·4		
Ireland	279·4		
Switzerland	108·0		
TOTAL	720·1	N/a	N/a

N/a—Not available.

Nominated Bodies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female members of nominated bodies in Wales in 1979 and 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

	1990
Female members of nominated bodies in Wales	282
Male members of nominated bodies in Wales	1,397

Information for 1979 was not collected and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Procedure Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the outstanding recommendations of the Procedure Committee which have not yet been put before the House for decision.

Mr. MacGregor: The following are the principal recommendations of the Procedure Committee since 1983-84 which have not yet been put to the House for decision on a substantive motion:

Session	*Title of Report*	*HC Number*	*Principal recommendation not yet put to the House for decision*
1985-86 (Second)	Allocation of time to Government Bills in Standing Committee	324	(a) Proceedings in Standing Committee should not continue beyond 10 pm. (b) Business Sub-Committees to be established for each Standing Committee on a Government Bill, to meet after sixth sitting of Standing Committee to consider progress of Bill and, if necessary, propose timetable for remainder of clauses.
1986-87 (First)	A Parliamentary Calendar	157	(a) Greater predictability of Recess timings and lengths. (b) Firmer dates for Christmas Recess (House to rise no later than 22 December and return no earlier than 7 January).

Session	Title of Report	HC Number	Principal recommendation not yet put to the House for decision
			(c) Easter and Whitsun Recesses to last at least one week. (d) Summer Recess to start no later then 21 July and end no earlier than 15 October. (e) Motions specifying Recess dates should not be taken on the same day as back-bench Adjournment debates following Third Reading of Consolidated Fund Bill.
1986-87 (Second)	Use of Time on the Floor of the House	350	(a) Greater use of Special Standing Committees. (b) Debate on Statutory Instrument to be normally limited to 1½ hours, whenever started. (c) Motions to approve Statutory Instruments to stand automatically referred to a Standing Committee, subject to the ability of 20 Members (or a Minister) to table a Motion to the effect that the Instrument be debated on the Floor of the House. (d) No entrenchment of 10 pm rule. (e) No adoption of morning sittings. (f) No new procedure for deferred divisions. (g) Private Members should not be empowered to move Motion at 2.30 pm on Fridays to prolong proceedings on Private Members' Bills or Motions. (h) On four Fridays devoted to Private Members' Motions, debate on the first Motion should lapse at 12.30 pm (i) On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, on an experimental basis, an additional 20 minute Adjournment debate should be introduced.
1988-89 (First)	Conduct of Members in the Chamber and the Alleged Abuse of Parliamentary Privilege	290	(a) No blanket increase in lengths of suspension laid down in Standing Order No. 43. (b) Suspension not to be accompanied by loss of salary. (c) Uncompleted periods of suspension to be carried over from one Session to the next. (d) Period of suspension incurred under Standing Order No. 43 to take account of any previous suspensions both in current and *preceding* Session. (e) Question on Motion to suspend Member named by Chair to be put forthwith, without formal moving by Leader of House (or another Minister). (f) No need for new rules of order to deal with alleged abuses of parliamentary privilege. (g) No case for formalised right of reply for persons claiming to have been harmed by unfounded allegations made under protection of privilege.
1988-89 (Third)	The System for Determining Precedence for the Introduction of Ten Minute Rule Bills	352	(a) For an experimental period, system of queueing for Ten Minute Rule Bill 'slots' to be replaced by ballot.
1989-90 (Second)	The Working of the Select Committee System	19-I	(a) Establishment of Sub-Committee of Liaison Committee to scrutinise bids for overseas travel by Select Committee. (b) Amendment of Standing Order No. 116 to permit embargoed copies of Select Committee Reports to be circulated two sitting days ahead of publication (rather than 48 hours). (c) Financial Secretary to the Treasury to cease to be member of Public Accounts Committee. (d) Changes in procedure for electing Select Committee Chairmen; senior Member to take Chair instead of Clerk; seniority to be defined as for election of Speaker.
1990-91 (Third)	Parliamentary Questions	178	(a) Period of Notice for Oral Questions to be reduced from 10 to 5 sitting days. (b) No ration on number of written questions tabled by a Members any one day. (c) Various changes in rules of order governing admissibility of Parliamentary Questions. (d) Abolition of 'blocks' system. (e) Answers to Parliamentary Questions about executive agencies to appear in Official Report, preceded by introductory form of words by the relevant Minister. (f) Speaker to instruct Editor of Official Report not to print 'pursuant' answers in certain circumstances.
1990-91 (Fourth)	Short Speeches	569	(a) Speaker to have free hand in deciding when to impose 10 minute limit on speeches "for the convenience of the House", after the opening speeches from the Government and from the main Opposition parties. (b) Front bench spokesmen to aim to speak, as a matter of normal practice, for no more than 20 minutes, excluding interruptions.

Note: It should be noted, however, that a number of the recommendations listed have been either the subject of, or relevant to, occasional general procedure debates, usually on Motions for the Adjournment of the House. Moreover, so far as the Procedure Committee's recommendations on Recess dates are concerned, the Hon. Member will know that in my Business Statement on 7 November, I repeated last year's innovation of giving much longer notice than usual of the likely dates of the Christmas and Easter Recesses. Equally, many of the Committee's outstanding recommendations about hours of sitting and the use of time on the floor of the House are directly relevant to the matters currently being considered by the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, and I understand that the Committee has access to all the relevant Procedure Committee Reports and Minutes of Evidence. Finally, I should point out that the Government has not yet replied formally to the Committee's two most recent Reports on Parliamentary Questions and Short Speeches and it is not the normal practice to ask the House to reach specific conclusions in those circumstances. So far as the Report on Short Speeches is concerned, I indicated in my recent oral evidence to the Sittings of the House Committee that I hoped they would feel able to endorse the Procedure Committee's recommendations in their own eventual Report to the House.

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the Parliamentary Works Office study on supplying the live television feed to hon. Members' offices is expected to report; and whether hon. Members are permitted to make their own arrangements to receive the feed, at their own expense, in the interval.

Mr. MacGregor: A preliminary examination of the technical feasibility of providing both data and video links to Members' offices is currently being undertaken by the House authorities. It is hoped that its conclusions will be submitted to the appropriate domestic Committee in the near future. If a decision were taken to proceed further with the project, the next step would be a detailed physical survey of the House and its outbuildings by the Parliamentary Works Office, or its successor organisation under the Ibbs reforms. It is too early to speculate on the timing of any such further study. In the meantime, it would not be appropriate for individual right hon. or hon. Members to seek to pre-empt the conclusions of those studies and their consideration by the relevant domestic Committees by making their own separate arrangements, whether or not at their own expense.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if hon. Members are permitted to receive the United Artists local cable services live television feed from the Chamber *(a)* at their homes and *(b)* in their Commons office.

Mr. MacGregor: On the first part of the hon. Member's question, what cable services right hon. and hon. Members choose to subscribe to at their own homes is entirely a matter for them. Access to a dedicated parliamentary channel, however delivered, in Members' offices in the House or its outbuildings would be no different, for practical purposes, from the provision of a clean feed direct from the Chamber, so the approval of both the Broadcasting Committee and the relevant post-Ibbs domestic Committee would be necessary.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if there is a live television feed from the Chamber to his Office *(a)* in the House and *(b)* in his departmental offices in Whitehall.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have a live television feed in my House of Commons office, but my Whitehall office is connected by spur to the Prime Minister's television feed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council when and from whom Mr. Speaker received permission to receive the clean television feed from the Chamber.

Mr. MacGregor: This facility was originally approved by the then Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House as part of the arrangements for the experiment in televising the House's proceedings, which began in November 1989.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those Government Departments which have arranged through the Central Office of Information to take the clean television feed from the Chamber; how many television sets can receive the pictures in each department; and where in each department each of the sets is located.

Mr. MacGregor: A clean television feed from the House of Commons is supplied by the Central Office of Information to the following Departments:

Department of Employment
Department of Energy
Department of the Environment
Department of Health
Prime Minister's Office
Scottish Office
Department of Trade and Industry
Department of Transport
Her Majesty's Treasury
Welsh Office

The number and location of television sets is a matter for Ministers in the Departments listed.

GAYE

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members are participating in the give-as-you-earn scheme of charitable giving so far as their parliamentary salary is concerned.

Mr. MacGregor: There are currently 56 Members who have authorised deductions from their parliamentary salaries under the payroll-giving scheme.

Members' Pensions

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Lord President of the Council what additional retirement pension would be earned by an hon. Member who had 10 years' service as *(a)* a junior Minister, *(b)* a Minister of State and *(c)* a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. MacGregor: Under the terms of the governing Acts of the parliamentary contributory pension fund Ministers and paid office-holders have the option of whether or not to join the supplementary scheme in addition to the basic scheme which is available to all Members. The rate of supplementary pension payable from the fund is based on the contributions paid on the amount of the Ministers' or office-holders' total remuneration which is in excess of Members' pensionable salary during the period of office. Since these salary and contribution levels are not constant, the pension figures set out have been calculated on current levels as if they were to pertain throughout the 10-year period. They also assume that the 10-year period ends at age 65.

	Percentage of ordinary Members salary as supplementary pension	*On supplementary pension calculated on current salary rate* £
Ten years service as a		
Cabinet Minister	21	6,200·00
Minister of State	14	3,969·00
Parliamentary Secretary	9	2,665·00

Members' Staff (Contracts)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members have not yet given any of their staff a contract of employment; how many individual staff do not have contracts; what action he is taking to ensure contracts are provided; what sanction he has against hon. Members who refuse to issue contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As at 31 October 1991, 35 Members had not sent contracts of employment in respect of any of their staff to the Fees Office. As at the same date, 195 staff of hon. Members were without contracts of employment lodged with the Fees Office. This figure includes both part-time staff for whom contracts may not be required and staff only recently engaged.

In those cases where a contract of employment has not been lodged with the Fees Office all hon. Members, other than those with recently engaged staff, have been contacted. As no hon. Member has refused to issue a contract the question of sanctions has not arisen.

Given that the Top Salaries Review Body is currently conducting a review of the office costs allowance, I have nothing further to add at this stage.

EMPLOYMENT

TECs

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why he decided not to accept the recommendation of the Select Committee on Employment's fifth report of Session 1990-91 that there should be only one auditor for each training and enterprise council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: This is fully set out in the Government's response to the Committee's report, a copy of which is available in the Library. The current audit arrangements are necessary to ensure the proper stewardship of public money and to comply with the Companies Act. These do not affect the TECs' ability to operate in a flexible and enterprising way.

Training Places

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many training and enterprise councils have *(a)* more than 1,000 and *(b)* between 500 and 999 young people awaiting offers of training places;

(2) how many young people in the Leeds training and enterprise council area are still awaiting an offer of a training place.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the provision by training and enterprise councils of work experience for young people in youth training.

Mr. Jackson: Training opportunities are dependent on employers' participation in the training programme. With our support, TECs are actively promoting the need for employers to maintain their investment in training. The Government are committed to ensuring the availability of suitable training for young people under the terms of their youth training guarantee.

Training Credits

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost of implementing training credits.

Mr. Jackson: The training credits initiative is a partnership involving expenditure from many different sources, including employers. In 1990-91, the cost to the Department of developing the training credits pilot schemes was £4·8 million. Planned provision for the 11 pilot schemes in the first full year of operation, 1991-92, is £122 million. This does not take account of administrative costs incurred by the Department and the training and enterprise councils and local enterprise company delivering training credits.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what sums have been spent on advertising training credits *(a)* to employers and *(b)* to trainees.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has incurred no expenditure on advertising training credits.

NVQs

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which areas of employment now have recognised NVQ qualifications; and when remaining areas will be finalised.

Mr. Jackson: A detailed listing of accredited NVQs is provided in the booket "The NVQ Framework", which is published by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and updated on a quarterly basis. A copy has been placed in the Library.

"The NVQ Framework" covers all major occupational areas and is sub-divided into 11 main categories, the first 10 of which already have a number of NVQs in place. These are:

(1) Tending animals, plants and land.
(2) Extracting and providing natural resources.
(3) Constructing.
(4) Engineering.
(5) Manufacturing.
(6) Transporting.
(7) Providing goods and services.
(8) Providing health, social care and protective services.
(9) Providing business services.
(10) Communicating and entertaining.
(11) Developing and extending knowledge and skill.

Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that all 11 categories are fully covered in all five NVQ levels within the framework. However, the immediate target is to have sufficient NVQs accredited by 31 December 1992 to cover 80 per cent. of the employed work force at NVQ levels 1 to 4. This will ensure all major occupations are covered.

Good progress continues to be made, with currently 322 NVQs accredited, covering some 40 per cent. of the employed work force at levels 1 to 4.

"The NVQ Framework" booklet includes a timetable for the submission of NVQs for accreditation over the ensuing 18 months.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for the latest period for which figures are available how much has been spent on marketing NVQ's to employers.

Mr. Jackson: The main responsibility for marketing NVQs rests with the employers in the sector concerned, and with the awarding bodies offering the NVQs.

The Government offer marketing support through the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and the Department of Employment's standards programme. To date this support has been concentrated on the development of NVQs. Marketing activities have included seminars, exhibitions and conferences. Some £400,000 was spent on these activities in 1990-91.

Over the next 18 months, the Government's focus will move increasingly to the implementation of NVQs. The NCVQ communications strategy will take forward the enhanced marketing of NVQs to employers. This commits £800,000 in 1991-92 and proposes further substantial investment in the following two years.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will issue notices at all jobcentres warning people of the potential costs of responding to advertisements from purported employers offering vacancies through 0898 telephone numbers.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Company Directors' Reports

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what conclusions he has drawn from recent employee involvement statements in company directors' reports in accordance with section 235 and schedule 7, part V, of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has today placed in the Library a survey of a sample of recent company reports. It shows a continuing improvement in the level and variety of employee involvement practices reported.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Yugoslavia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any consideration has been given to giving aid to Hungary to help with the Yugoslav refugees either bilaterally from the United Kingdom or from the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: We are carefully monitoring the situation of Yugoslav refugees in Hungary and have contributed via the European Community, which has so far provided 360,000 ecu for refugee relief in Hungary to be distributed via the International Red Cross and non-governmental organisations.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to which we are also a major contributor, has set aside a budget this year of US$3·1 million for these refugees. The number of refugees is currently estimated at 35,000.

We have no aid programme for Hungary, although it is able to benefit from the know-how fund for eastern European countries.

Dubrovnik

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give consideration to joining the French and Italian Governments in the provision of humanitarian aid to the besieged people of Dubrovnik; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are urgently considering with all other member states of the European Community and with agencies of the United Nations and the International Red Cross movement options for co-ordinated humanitarian aid to the people of Dubrovnik, as well as to other parts of Yugoslavia affected by the recent fighting.

Ministers of the member countries of the Western European Union agreed on 18 November to examine the possibility of helping the Red Cross by the use of naval units in the area. We have already responded to Red Cross requests by providing 425,000 blankets and a cash grant of £250,000, together valued at £1·75 million, for the victims of the fighting. Consignments of these blankets have gone direct to Dubrovnik.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

12. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve animal welfare standards throughout Europe.

Mr. Maclean: We continue to press for the highest standards of animal welfare to be adopted throughout the Community and have now achieved our key objectives on the protection on animal transport including horses.

We will continue to strive for adoption of United Kingdom standards, including those for calf and pig farming, throughout the EC.

Farm Woodland Premium Scheme

13. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about the proposed farm woodland premium scheme.

Mr. Gummer: This week we published our consultation document on our proposed new farm woodland premium scheme and a copy is in the Library of the House.

CAP

14. **Sir Patrick Duffy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

17. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a

statement on the MacSharry proposals for reform of the common agricultural policy outlining the latest position in their consideration by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham).

26. **Mrs Currie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in reducing subsidies to agriculture in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: I refer to the reply I have just given to the hon. Members for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) and for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). The Government aim to secure, through reform of the common agricultural policy, lower levels of agricultural support throughout the European Community.

Mesh Sizes

18. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what position he intends to take on the French call for a reduction in minimum mesh sizes in the southern North sea.

Mr. Curry: We reject this and it was not included in the package of technical conservation measures recently agreed by the Council of Fisheries Ministers.

Fish Stocks

19. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the implementation of measures to conserve fish stocks in the European Community.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 6 November following the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers on 28 October 1991. At that meeting, we secured a package of important measures to improve the conservation of fish stocks; these will be implemented from 1 June 1992.

25. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken recently to improve the conservation of fish stocks.

Mr. Curry: In July the United Kingdom introduced a unilateral requirement for square mesh panels in certain nets to reduce the catch and discard of immature fish. At the October Fisheries Council we secured an important package of EC measures which will greatly improve the conservation of fish stocks.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects his Department to take over responsibility for the countryside stewardship scheme.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I will review the position when the Countryside Commission is able to provide an evaluation of the scheme based on its achievements.

Fishing, Northumberland

21. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will undertake a visit to Northumberland fishing ports to study the future of the fishing industry in the area.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to do so at present.

Food From Britain

22. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what promotional activities Food From Britain has organised to draw attention to British products.

Mr. Curry: Food From Britain promotes British food and drink both at home and abroad. Its activities include British displays at all the major food trade fairs, tastings and other forms of catering and retail promotion, introductions of British suppliers to potential customers, and comprehensive guides to the availability of British foods, newsletters and other forms of printed publicity.

Scientific Whaling

23. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has made to those countries engaged in scientific whaling.

Mr. Gummer: Programmes for scientific whaling were again fully discussed at the last meeting of the International Whaling Commission in May. The United Kingdom successfully co-sponsored resolutions calling upon both Japan and the USSR to reconsider their position.

Horses and Ponies

24. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the welfare of horses and ponies subject to export after 1992.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler).

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what time limit has been set on the derogation to Britain of the ban on the export of live horses to the continent for slaughter; if he will make a statement on the conditions relating to the agreement; and when he envisages the matter being raised again in Community negotiations.

Mr. Maclean: The directive concerning the welfare of animals during transport provides for national arrangements on horses to continue without specifying a time limit. It also establishes that the Council, acting on proposals from the commission, will adopt additional conditions for all transport of horses in the Community in order to safeguard their welfare. No timetable is set for these additional rules and it is not known when the Community will address the issue.

Animals (Transport)

27. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the transport of animals within the European Community.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the recent agreement in the Farm Council on the transport of horses and other animals.

Mr. Maclean: The directive on protection of animals during transport has now been adopted formally by the Council and will be published shortly. The agreement reflects the deep public concern in this country over the transport of horses and other animals and the Government are grateful to all those who gave support in the negotiations by making their views known to the Commission and throughout the Community.

Fishing Grounds (Pollution)

28. **Dr. Kim Howells** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to safeguard fishing grounds from pollution originating offshore.

Mr. Curry: This Ministry works closely with other Departments in operating a comprehensive range of measures under the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971 and the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to protect fisheries, and the marine environment generally, from pollution originating offshore.

State Veterinary Service

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the British Veterinary Association to discuss the future of the state veterinary service.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Minister has not met the British Veterinary Association specifically to discuss the future of the state veterinary service.

However, Ministers and officials have regular contact with the association and its representatives on a wide range of issues.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 18 and 19 November.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council together with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

There was a discussion of the significant progress that has been made recently in the discussions towards an agricultural agreement in GATT. I stressed that genuine reform required reductions in support over time whatever form such support took, with only genuine environmental and similar measures being exempted from the process of reduction. I urged the Commissioner to negotiate accordingly. Unfortunately he seems to take the view at present that only direct price support need be subject to reduction and in particular that any compensation for such reductions need not be reduced. We shall continue to press our view.

There were detailed discussions on the arable, tobacco and sheepmeat dossiers included in the proposed reforms of the common agricultural policy. On the arable dossier I stressed that payments on set-aside land must not discriminate against larger producers. On tobacco we urged the need to scale down support significantly consistent with the Community's position on health issues. On sheepmeat, I said that the proposed reductions in headage limits—maximum payments per producer—were unacceptable to the United Kingdom and urged that savings be made instead by price cuts or other means. Discussion will resume at the next meeting on 11-12 December.

Veterinary Products

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the technical competence of the Veterinary Products Committee and of the EC Veterinary Products Committee to judge the safety and human health aspects of the use of veterinary products.

Mr. Gummer: Members of the Veterinary Products Committee are expert in a number of scientific disciplines relevant to the consideration of the safety, quality and efficacy of veterinary medicines. When aspects falling outside their specific fields of expertise arise, they take advice from the Department of Health and other suitably qualified experts. Apart from the Medicines Commission, we are satisfied that no other body of equivalent competence exists in this country.

Members of the EC Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products are officials from member states. They are not required to have personal scientific expertise in the same way as VPC members, but draw on expertise available in all the member states, including that of the Veterinary Products Committee.

Poultry (Rare Breeds)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will amend the poultry regulations to ensure that rare breeds, housed and kept separately for breeding purposes, are defined as individual flocks.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to do so.

Milk Production

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the total volume of United Kingdom milk production last year; and what proportion this represents of total EC milk production.

Mr. Curry: Total United Kingdom milk production, including milk fed directly to calves, was estimated at 15,212,000 tonnes during 1990, 13 per cent. of the EC total. Deliveries to dairies amounted to 14,574,000 tonnes, 13·75 per cent. of the EC total.

Animals and Birds (Imports)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken in the light of recommendations by the Joint Nature Conservation

Committee to restrict the number of United Kingdom ports through which live animals and birds may be imported.

Mr. Maclean: The recommendation to consider restricting the number of ports through which live animals may be imported was one of a number of recommendations made by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in its recent report on trade in wildlife. As the wildlife trade raises many complex issues which do not affect the United Kingdom alone, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and I wrote recently to the European Commissioners for agriculture and the environment drawing the JNCC report to their attention and pressing for stricter Community-wide controls over international trade in wildlife. A Commission proposal for a new regulation on the wildlife trade is expected to be published soon and we shall take full account of the JNCC advice in the subsequent discussions.

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests have been carried out by his Ministry concerning the safety of bovine somatotropin and food products derived from it for humans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is for licence applicants to undertake, in accordance with internationally accepted rules of good laboratory practice, all tests which are considered necessary to satisfy the licensing authority.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for the use of bovine somatotropin he has received in each of the last three years and to date in 1991; if he will indicate in each case whether the applications have been refused, and how many are going through appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No product licence applications were received during this period. One application for an animal test certificate was received in 1988: that application is currently the subject of an appeal to the Veterinary Products Committee which is minded to advise that it should not be granted.

In addition, applications to renew ATCs granted before 1988 were received in each of the years identified, and were granted. Applications to vary these ATCs were received in 1988, two; 1989, nine; 1990 seven; and 1991 to date, four; and have been granted.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the discussions in the EC about the continuation of the moratorium on the use of bovine somatotropin after 31 December; and when he expects a decision to be taken about its continuation.

Mr. Gummer: Progress made by the Commission with its report on the future use of BST was raised under other business at the Agriculture Council on 18-19 November. The Commission indicated that it expects to report to the Council within the next few weeks.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research that has been considered by the Veterinary Products Committee concerning the effect of food produced by the use of bovine somatotropin on human health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Committee has seen the results of research into the composition of milk from treated and untreated cows which identified minute differences in the average content of lipids, biotin, IGF1 and BST. It has also seen the results of research into the effect of these four substances on humans and has taken advice from nutritional experts. It is satisfied that the widespread use of BST to increase milk yields would not adversely affect the health of consumers.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the possible extension of the present EC ban on bovine somatotropin; and when he expects the matter to be further discussed at the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission has made no proposals for arrangements to apply after the current moratorium on the use of BST expires. If it does, my right hon. Friend will determine his policy according to the merit of the proposals. Progress made by the Commission with its report on the future use of BST was raised under other business at the Argiculture Council on 18-19 November. The Commission indicated that it expected to report to the Council within the next few weeks.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will state the number of draft proposals he has received from sea fisheries committees to regulate the use of fixed engines and the number he rejected in respect of the last 12 months for which data are available.

Mr. Curry: Ministerial confirmation has been sought for three byelaws made by sea fisheries committees to regulate the placing or use of fixed engines. One needs to be re-advertised and we are in active correspondence with the relevant SFC on the other two on drafting and procedural points respectively. None has been rejected.

"Our Farming Future"

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to distribute copies of "Our Farming Future" to individual farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Copies of "Our Farming Future" are available to farmers on request from the Ministry, particularly through its regional and divisional offices. Copies have also been provided to the National Farmers Union.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish the follow-up to "Our Farming Future"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Decisions on any future statements of Government policy on agriculture will be taken in the light of the outcome of negotiations on CAP reform and on the Uruguay round.

Environmental Health

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet the Institution of Environmental Health Officers to discuss whether meat inspection should remain a local authority function.

Mr. Maclean: Our officials and those of the Department of Health are in regular contact with representatives of the institution, and have on a number of occasions discussed with them the future arrangements for meat hygiene enforcement. In addition, the institution has submitted written evidence to the review of meat hygiene enforcement in Great Britain and was represented on the review consultative panel. The views of the institution will be taken fully into account by the Agriculture and Health Ministers when a decision is reached on future meat hygiene enforcement arrangements.

Dairy Industry

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the dairy industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Dairy farming remains a relatively profitable sector of United Kingdom agriculture, sustained by support prices substantially above world market levels. Despite the existence of quotas limiting production, more than 20 per cent. of EC milk production in 1990 required subsidised disposal. It remains our long-term aim to return to a more market-oriented system in the dairy sector, including the eventual removal of production quotas. In the meantime we are convinced of the need to change United Kingdom milk marketing arrangements to enable the industry to meet the challenge of the single market.

Tobacco

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to reduce the cost to the Exchequer of the common agricultural policy tobacco regime.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission has tabled proposals for the reform of the tobacco regime which, it estimates, would result in budgetary savings of some 418 million ECU(B)—£291 million—a year when fully implemented. In discussion of these proposals the Government are pressing for the most radical reform negotiable.

Beef Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of live cattle and the tonnage of beef imported into Great Britain for human consumption from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively for each year since 1985.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 11 November 1991]:* Imports from the Republic of Ireland, since 1985, are as follows:

	Beef (tonnes)	*Cattle (Number of head)*
1985	84,000	220,000
1986	122,000	232,000
1987	123,000	151,000
1988	112,000	175,000
1989	34,000	115,000
1990	78,000	121,000

Note: Figures to nearest '000 tonnes.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

We are unable to provide figures for imports from Northern Ireland as these statistics are not collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Pollution

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution has been made to date by his Department to Her Majesty's Government's submission on control and reduction of aquatic pollution to the preparatory committee meetings for the United Nations conference on environment and development in Brazil in 1992; and what proposals he expects to be submitted on oceanic and marine pollution by Her Majesty's Government to the UNCED from the present day to June 1992.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has been involved in the normal way in the Government's collective consideration of aquatic pollution matters arising in the preparatory committee meetings for the United Nations conference on environment and development. A very wide range of proposals is already under discussion at those meetings.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces Act 1980

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to propose amendments to the Reserve Forces Act 1980 in the light of the Gulf war experiences.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Studies into the role and size of the reserve forces are currently being undertaken as a result of both the "Options for Change" exercise and our Gulf war experiences. In the light of the conclusions of these studies we will, of course, consider whether a review of our existing reserves legislation will be required.

Medical Services

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to review the present level of medical services for the armed forces; and when he expects to announce the results.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A review is in progress to consider the future requirement for medical support to the armed forces, the outcome of which will in part be reliant upon other changes in the armed forces. It is too early to say when the review will be complete.

Ministry Houses, Fife

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses are owned by the Ministry of Defence in Fife, North-East; and what is the current occupancy rate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the Ministry of Defence owned 726 houses and flats in the Fife, North-East constituency, of which 633 were occupied representing 87 per cent. of the total stock. Many of the unoccupied properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, two properties were in the process of being sold.

Fishing Vessels (Accidents)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about all types of incidents leading to damage or loss of life involving fishing boats and submarines in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991 to date; and if he has made any arrangements to alter the method of notification of such incidents.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested for Royal Navy submarines is as follows:

Date	*Vessel*	*Area*	*Incident*
28 June 1989	FV Huntress	Clyde	Submarine snagged nets
12 September 1989	FV Contester	Irish Sea	Submarine communications buoy became caught in nets
13 November 1989	FV Scotia	Off Lewis	Submarine snagged nets
22 November 1990	FV Antares	Clyde	Submarine snagged nets and as a result the fishing vessel capsized and sank

Over the same period, there were also two incidents involving United States submarines in United Kingdom waters, neither of which involved the loss of life.

There have been no changes in the arrangements for reporting incidents between Royal Navy ships and civilian craft.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all compensation payments *(a)* already made and *(b)* outstanding to owners of fishing boats for damage caused by submarine activity in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following list relates solely to damage caused or alleged to be caused by Royal Navy submarines:

	Number of claims and compensation paid
1979	
Number of claims made	4
Number refuted	1
Number settled	3
Amount of compensation paid	£1,008·00
1980	
Number of claims made	1
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£2,900·00
1981	
Number of claims made	1
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£2,800·00
1982	
Number of claims made	2
Number settled	2
Amount of compensation paid	£451,000·00
1983	
Number of claims made	4
Number refuted	3
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£24,273·96
1984	
Number of claims	1
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£8,013·54
1985	
No incidents	
1986	
Number of claims	2
Number refuted	2
1987	
Number of claims	2
Number refuted	1
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£9,611·00
1988	
Number of claims	4
Number refuted	1
Number settled	3
Amount of compensation paid	£19,000·00
1989	
Number of claims	4
Number refuted	2
Number outstanding	1
Number settled	1
Amount of compensation paid	£18,963·41
1990	
Number of claims	1
Number outstanding	1

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what inquiry reports his Department has received from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch since 1979 of losses of, or damage to, fishing vessels; what action has been taken in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department currently holds reports of the marine accident investigation branch investigations into incidents between submarines and the fishing vessels Huntress and Scotia. These reports were taken into account when formulating current operating instructions. Reports into incidents involving the fishing vessels Mhari-L, Inspire and Moray Adventurer are also held. There was no Royal Navy involvement in these incidents and therefore no need for any subsequent follow-up action by this Department.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the last three years the number of occasions the Royal Navy air-sea rescue has been called out to deal with incidents involving fishing vessels at sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following table provides details of call-outs of both Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search-and-rescue helicopters to incidents involving fishing vessels at sea during 1988, 1989, 1990 and to 31 August 1991:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Royal Navy	42	59	47	46
Royal Air Force	179	185	145	81
Total number of people recovered	116	166	114	108

MFV Inspire

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding the verdict of the jury in relation to the sinking of the Inspire and the possibility of submarine involvement; what information he has concerning activities of *(a)* United Kingdom, *(b)* NATO and *(c)* other countries' submarines in the area at the date and time in question; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the jury at the inquest returned a verdict of death by unlawful killing. As was made clear in the evidence given, there were no Royal Navy or NATO submarines in Cardigan bay or the Irish sea on the day in question. Nor, to the best of our knowledge, were there any submarines belonging to other nations in the area at the time. I therefore see no need for the Ministry of Defence to take any action as a result of the inquest.

Exercise Cockfight

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what surface and submarine vessels will be involved in Exercise Cockfight in the firth of Clyde later this month; what is the total duration of the exercise; what will be the extent of submarine activity and during which periods; what representations he has received expressing concern at the dangers to fishing activity in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: One Royal Navy and one Royal Netherlands Navy submarine, together with HMS Brave, His Belgian Majesty's naval ship Wielingen, HMS Sentinel and support craft of the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service are taking part in the inshore phase of Exercise Cockfight, which lasts from 23 to 28 November. During this period, both submarines will conduct dived operations in the Firth of Clyde on each day. The Clyde fishermen's associations have been given full details of planned submarine movements, which will also be notified under the subfacts arrangements. Representations on this exercise have been received from a number of hon. Members, representatives of Scottish fishing interests and others.

Territorial Army

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to pay the annual bounty to Territorial soldiers who served in the Gulf, although they have not served the statutory 15-day period camp or course.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering a number of claims in the light of individual circumstances.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Scottish Territorial soldiers have not received the annual bounty this year after serving in the Gulf with 205 Scottish general hospital.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not immediately available, but I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *672*, if he will name the sergeant who died in Zimbabwe in September 1990; in which part of the country the accident took place; what were the circumstances of the accident; if there was an inquest; and what were the duties in Zimbabwe of the non-commissioned officer in question.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The service man in question was Sergeant Sibajang Rai, of the 7th Gurkha Rifles. Sergeant Rai was part of the British military advisory team. The road traffic accident occurred in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe in the Nyanga area, on the Dombo road leading from the village of Nyanga to the Mozambique training team border camp. Sergeant Rai was killed when his vehicle overturned on the winding dirt road. No United Kingdom inquest was held as Sergeant Rai's body was repatriated to Hong Kong and therefore did not come under the jurisdiction of a United Kingdom coroner. Although a local post-mortem was conducted, the district administrative office in Nyanga did not require an inquest. Sergeant Rai's duties were as a platoon sergeant instructor of Mozambique recruits.

Ballistic Missiles

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those countries assessed as possessing ballistic missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following countries are assessed as possessing ballistic missiles: Afghanistan, Belgium, Bulgaria, China (PRC), Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Libya, Netherlands, North Korea, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Syria, USSR, United States of America, United Kingdom and Yemen.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Army service personnel, *(b)* Royal Air Force service personnel and *(c)* Royal Navy personnel have applied for voluntary redundancy; and whether he has any plans to make further offers of voluntary redundancy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[pursuant to his reply, 8 November col. 296]:* A reduction of 8,000 in total Royal Navy numbers is planned by 1995. Most of these will be achieved by natural turnover, reduced recruiting and by the application of certain manpower regulators. However, there will be a need for a limited redundancy programme, phased over two or three years. In 1992-93 this will affect about 80 captains and commanders and 320 warrant officers and chief and petty officers. It is hoped that this target will be achieved by voluntary means, but some

compulsory measures cannot be ruled out in order to achieve the correct seniority spread within the ranks and specialisations. Personnel will be selected from categories in surplus, bearing in mind the need to maintain a balance of skills and experience. It will be necessary to include in the programme officers and ratings with significant time to serve as well as those within a few years of retirement/discharge.

The same financial terms will apply as in all such service schemes since 1975. These provide for an immediate pension for those with 12 or more years service—instead of the normal 16 years for an officer and 22 for a rating—together with a tax-free capital payment of up to 18 months' pay in addition to the pension benefits. The detailed terms will shortly be promulgated to the Navy and applications will be invited to take effect in 1992-93.

All those selected are eligible for the full facilities of the resettlement programme, including counselling and up to 28 days' training to assist them in utilising their skills in the civilian job market. Help with job finding will be available from the employment liaison officer, Navy, the Officers Association or the Regular Forces Employment Association, both of which receive funding from the Department. Full details of these and other agencies will be covered in resettlement interviews. Advice is also included on how to set about finding housing and how to put special capital payment and pensions to best use for this purpose. It is expected that most naval personnel leaving on this basis will have made, or will be able to make, suitable arrangements for their housing needs. Where this is not the case we are currently studying a number of options in order to assist in both the short and long term.

In the case of the Army, we have received applications from 4,492 soldiers and 801 officers for the scheme in 1992-93. I am pleased therefore to say that all the reduction of 2,500 soldiers and the large majority of the reduction of 850 officers in 1992-93 will be from those who asked to be considered. It will, however, be necessary to select about 160 officers of middle and more senior rank who have not put their names forward for consideration. Selection boards are now sitting and everyone will be notified on 26 February 1992.

In the RAF, the need for redundancies remains under consideration.

Royal Navy Ships

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) why, pursuant to his answer of 7 November, *Official Report*, column *253*, he has reversed his decision announced on 21 October, *Official Report*, column *446*, to place HMS Humber in reserve; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when, pursuant to his answer of 7 November, *Official Report*, column *253*, it was decided to place HMS Ribble in reserve; to which Royal Naval Reserve sea training centre it was allocated; and where those Royal Naval Reserve personnel affected will now have access to sea training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The decision to place two River class minesweepers in reserve was taken earlier this year as part of our annual review of the forward equipment programme. Originally HMS Humber and HMS Helmsdale were identified. It was decided subsequently that HMS Ribble should be placed in reserve rather than HMS Humber which was in better condition. HMS Ribble had been allocated to HMS Eaglet in Liverpool; HMS Humber will replace HMS Ribble there, and will continue to provide access to sea training for Royal Naval Reserve personnel.

HEALTH

Hypothermia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing how many people categorised by age died of hypothermia, or illnesses associated with hypothermia, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the following tables:

Number of deaths, and rates per million population, for which hypothermia[1] was stated as the underlying cause of death in England 1979-90

Year			Age at death							
	All ages[2]	*Under 1*[2]	*1–4*	*5–9*	*10–14*	*15–19*	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*
1979										
Number	404	7	1	—	—	3	—	2	6	4
Rate	8·7	12·0	0·5	—	—	0·8	—	0·6	1·7	1·4
1980										
Number	245	3	—	—	1	1	1	1	2	2
Rate	5·2	5·0	—	—	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·6	0·7
1981										
Number	250	2	2	—	—	1	—	2	2	2
Rate	5·3	3·3	0·9	—	—	0·3	—	0·6	0·6	0·7
1982										
Number	301	2	—	—	1	2	4	—	—	1
Rate	6·4	3·4	—	—	0·3	0·5	1·1	—	—	0·3
1983										
Number	209	2	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	5
Rate	4·5	3·4	—	—	—	—	0·3	0·6	0·3	1·5

Year	All ages[2]	Under 1[2]	Age at death 1–4	5–9	10–14	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39
1984										
Number	249	2	—	1	—	3	1	1	1	3
Rate	5·3	3·4	—	0·4	—	0·8	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·9
1985										
Number	407	2	1	1	—	1	2	2	3	6
Rate	8·7	3·3	0·4	—	—	0·3	0·5	0·6	1·0	1·7
1986										
Number	411	—	—	—	—	2	3	4	2	2
Rate	8·7	—	—	—	—	0·5	0·7	1·1	0·6	0·6
1987										
Number	249	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	10
Rate	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	0·3	0·3	0·3	3·0
1988										
Number	181	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	4	1
Rate	3·8	—	0·8	—	—	—	0·3	—	1·2	0·3
1989										
Number	156	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Rate	3·3	—	—	—	—	—	0·3	—	—	—
1990										
Number	143	—	—	—		—	2	1	1	—
Rate	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	0·5	0·3	0·3	—

Year	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84	85 and over
1979										
Number	8	4	9	20	32	24	49	60	79	96
Rate	3·0	1·5	3·3	6·8	14·1	10·1	24·8	43·6	104·3	197·3
1980										
Number	3	5	8	13	12	23	25	57	41	47
Rate	1·1	1·9	3·0	4·6	5·1	9·7	12·5	40·5	52·3	94·0
1981										
Number	5	6	8	7	11	14	22	54	43	69
Rate	1·9	2·3	3·0	2·6	4·5	6·0	11·0	37·6	52·8	135·0
1982										
Number	4	7	13	14	11	32	38	41	54	77
Rate	1·5	2·7	5·0	5·3	4·3	14·1	18·9	28·1	64·0	146·0
1983										
Number	3	6	3	6	11	14	25	39	41	50
Rate	1·1	2·3	1·2	2·3	4·1	6·5	12·4	26·2	46·7	92·5
1984										
Number	1	8	7	6	15	15	42	43	44	56
Rate	0·4	3·0	2·7	2·3	5·5	7·4	20·8	28·3	48·3	100·3
1985										
Number	4	7	9	9	19	23	41	96	74	108
Rate	1·4	2·6	3·6	3·5	7·2	10·8	20·4	62·5	79·1	185·9
1986										
Number	6	7	6	17	26	26	34	64	90	122
Rate	2·0	2·7	2·4	6·7	10·2	11·8	17·1	41·4	94·1	202·2
1987										
Number	6	7	5	13	16	21	25	36	48	59
Rate	1·8	2·7	2·0	5·1	6·4	9·1	13·0	23·1	48·7	91·0
1988										
Number	5	8	4	6	10	16	14	18	42	50
Rate	1·5	3·0	1·6	2·4	4·1	6·7	7·7	11·5	41·6	73·7
1989										
Number	4	2	3	4	8	11	23	20	26	54
Rate	1·2	0·7	1·2	1·6	3·3	4·4	13·4	12·7	25·1	75·8

Year	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84	85 and over
1990										
Number	6	3	1	2	11	12	13	27	25	39
Rate	1·7	1·1	0·4	0·8	4·6	5·0	7·2	17·1	23·8	52·7

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 778·3 and 991·6.
[2] Excluding deaths at ages under 28 days for the years 1986 to 1990.

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate in England and Wales, 1979-1990

Year	Number of deaths
1979	863
1980	596
1981	685
1982	664
1983	538
1984	555
1985	827
1986	837
1987	559
1988	440
1989	368
1990	370

Mental and Psychiatric Illness

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of hospital in-patient admissions on grounds of mental or psychiatric illness in each regional health authority area for each quarterly period from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional figures for the financial year 1989-90 are shown in the table. It is not possible to produce a quarterly breakdown of these figures without incurring disproportionate cost.

Estimated Admissions, under the care of a Mental Illness Consultant, to National Health Service hospitals and units, by Regional Health Authority during 1989-90.

Regional Health Authority	Admissions
Northern	14,100
Yorkshire	15,200
Trent	13,900
East Anglian	7,300
North West Thames	13,700
North East Thames	17,000
South East Thames	14,700
South West Thames	12,900
Wessex	12,800
Oxford	8,000
South Western	17,200
West Midlands	17,200
Mersey	10,000
North Western	18,700
SHAs	1,700
ENGLAND	194,500

Note: Figures may not add due to rounding.

Lancashire Ambulance Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in each of the last five years ambulances of the Lancashire ambulance service have been used to convey private patients.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not available in the form requested.

The table shows the number of patient journeys carried out by the Lancashire ambulance service for each year from 1986 to 1990-91 for which a charge was made. Patients charged for include those moved on behalf of social services or other departments of local authorities, organisations on repayment, and private individuals.

Patient transport services: summary of patient journeys Lancashire Ambulance Authority

Year	Total number of patients charged for
1986	15
[1]1987-88	104
1988-89	69
[2]1989-90	33
1990-91	90

[1] From 1987 collection of data changed from years ending 31 December to years ending 31 March.
[2] The industrial action during 1989 has affected data quality and completeness.

Youth Treatment Centres

Sir Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has made appointments to his special group on youth treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 1 October 1991 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health established a special group of outside people to provide independent advice about the youth treatment centres. Chaired by Mrs. Winifred Tumim, the group consists of: Dr. Zarrina Kurtz, assistant regional medical officer in South West Thames regional health authority; Mr. Tom White CBE, chief executive of the National Children's Homes; Mr. Harry Cayton, director of the Alzheimers Disease Society; and Dr. Michael Lindsay, from 1987 children's rights officer for Leicestershire social services department. Their responsibility is to provide an independent perspective on care and practice in the youth treatment service, with particular regard to ensuring that children's rights are properly safeguarded, and to advise the Secretary of State on these matters. Their periodic reports will be published.

The social services inspectorate remains the principal monitoring arm for detailed scrutiny of the standard of care, control, education and rehabilitation programmes provided in the centres. Medical and nursing experts and HMIs will form part of this evaluation. There will be a full inspection every three years and reports will be published.

On 1 April 1992, the service will be managed by a chief executive accountable to the Secretary of State for the facilities provided under section 82(5) of the Children Act 1989. After open competition Mr. Eugene Ostapuik, the director of Glenthorne YTC, has been appointed chief executive for the whole service. He will be chief executive designate with effect from 1 December 1991 and will take up post next April, initially for a three-year term. He will

be supported by an advisory committee, which will help him to keep the service abreast of child care practice. A service specification for the new organisation will be published in the new year. The Secretary of State's special group is being consulted at the drafting stage. Meanwhile, regulations and guidance on secure accommodation, which came into effect on 14 October 1991 under the Children Act 1989, have been applied administratively to the Glenthorne and St. Charles youth treatment centres.

On 24 June my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced temporary management changes at the St. Charles YTC following an inquiry into complaints about treatment at that centre, *Official Report*, Volume 193, col. 687-93. The disciplinary inquiry into the conduct of some members of staff at St. Charles YTC is continuing. My right hon. Friend also announced a review to ensure that the headquarters of the Department of Health had pursued with proper vigour and judgment the recommendations of the inspection by the social services inspectorate in 1988. He asked Sir Ewen Broadbent to consider the circumstances, and I am placing a copy of Sir Ewen's report in the Library. Sir Ewen concluded, broadly, that those parts of the Department closely concerned with the SSI inspection report acted with efficiency and vigour.

The YTCs cater for the country's most difficult adolescents. The work is always demanding, often stressful and the many achievements go largely unnoticed. The new management structure will promote better integration of care practice and standards as well as improved value for money.

Pimozide

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by year the numbers of reports of *(a)* cardiac arrhythmias (fatal and non-fatal) and *(b)* other fatalities associated with pimozide which were reported to the licensing authority since it was first licensed; and indicate in all those cases the dose of pimozide used and types and doses of other anti-psychotic medicines which were taken at the same time as pimozide.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There have been 29 yellow card reports of cardiac arrhythmias associated with the drug pimozide, of which 14 were fatal. The breakdown by year is as follows:

Year of Report	*Reports*	*Fatalities*
1971	2	—
1980	1	—
1984	1	—
1988	2	1
1989	2	1
1990	14	8
1991	7	4

There have been seven other fatalities associated with pimozide as follows:

Year of Report	*Fatalities*
1972	1
1978	1
1980	3
1984	1
1986	1

The daily dose of pimozide and concurrent use of neuroleptic agents in the fatal reports is summarised as follows:

Daily dose (mg)	*Total*	*Concurrent Neuroleptics*
<10	5	2
11-20	2	2
21-30	2	—
31-40	5	4
41-50	2	1
51-60	2	2
61+	3	2

I will write to the right hon. Member with full details of dose and other anti-psychotic medicines taken.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when doctors in the United Kingdom were recommended to reduce the maximum dosage of pimozide to 20 mg; and when he first became aware of the United States recommendation on this matter.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In August 1990, the Committee on Safety of Medicines advised that a maximum daily dose of 20 mg should not be exceeded for the drug pimozide. This information was communicated to all doctors in the United Kingdom in issue No. 29 of the CSM bulletin "Current Problems", a copy of which is available in the Library. The company marketing the drug wrote to all doctors in October 1990 enclosing a copy of the revised data sheet and emphasising the change in prescribing information and the maximum recommended dose of 20 mg per day.

Revised dose recommendations made in the United States in 1988 related to use in a different medical condition, commonly prevalent in children, and not to use in schizophrenia and other psychoses, the main indication in the United Kingdom.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail the research proposals on myalgic encephalomyelitis that have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected for funding by his Department and the Medical Research Council over the last three years, stating in relation to rejected proposals the reasons for rejection in each case.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not accepted any research proposals on myalgic encephalomyelitis. Such proposals would normally be referred to the Medical Research Council, which is the main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom. The MRC is an independent body which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. It decides what research to support on its own expert judgment.

The MRC is not currently funding research specifically into ME. It is, however, funding one study at the Institute of Psychiatry, which is to investigate chronic fatigue in general practitioner attenders. Five other research applications in this area were received over the last three years, which the MRC rejected because they were not of high enough scientific quality, given the funds available. The council also supports work on immune responses to

the muscle, nerve cells and related structures which may have some relevance to the understanding and treatment of this condition.

Social Work (International Centre)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has made to the recent feasibility study by the National Institute of Social Work concerning a proposed international centre, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have not as yet received a copy of the feasibility study which I understand is shortly to be put out for consultation. We are, however, providing the National Institute of Social Work with a grant of £100,000 in 1992-93 for work to promote the international exchange of social services staff.

Autistic Children

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any assessment of the number of autistic children in England and Wales; and if he will give the total number of places in residential schools for autistic children.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The most reliable estimates indicate that the prevalence of autism is between four to five per 10,000 population. The number of places in residential schools for autistic children is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

National Health Service Leaflet (Cost)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of the production and distribution of the leaflet, "Your NHS, Our Pledge", which was produced by South West Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 7,000 copies of the leaflet "Your NHS, Our Pledge" were produced and distributed by South West Thames regional health authority at a cost of £2,181. Its purpose is to demonstrate the firm commitment of chairmen in that region to improving patient care through the charter.

National Health Service (Information Strategy)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the information strategy for the national health service; how much it will cost to implement: and whether additional funds will be made available to the national health service to cover the cost of implementation.

Mr. Dorrell: The national health service management executive is discussing the development of information systems within the national health service. Information systems must support the provision of high—quality, cost-effective health services. The scope, costs and funding of information systems depend on the outcome of these discussions.

Child Refugees

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child refugees have been taken into care by each London local authority during each of the last 12 months; what information he has on their country of origin; and what is the estimated cost of care to each local authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Nursery Places (Crown Premises)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis a Department of Health press release, dated 11 June, identified an increase of 75 per cent. in nursery places on Crown premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figure was derived from the Department's statistics on day care services in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1990 England (A/F 90/6)", a copy of which is available in the Library. Tables 1 and 2, which contain historical data on the number of day care places and premises, include information on facilities which were not required to register with the local authority. Between 1988 and 1990, the number of places in such facilities grew from 1,034 to 1,810. Facilities on Crown premises are likely to be the most significant category exempt from the requirement to register.

Child Workers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action he will take to regularise child working conditions across the United Kingdom, in terms of hours worked, daytime work periods, nature of work and working conditions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what studies have been carried out by his Department dealing with the number of children working in the United Kingdom; and what are his current estimates for the number of children working in Great Britain.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to introduce changes to the present provisions.

Section 1(1) of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 prohibits the employment of any person under school leaving age in an industrial undertaking. This legislation, which is applicable to Great Britain, is enforced by Health and Safety Executive inspectors.

In England, the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 sets out general restrictions governing the part-time employment of children under school leaving age. Local authority byelaws made under the Act set out further restrictions while responding to local employment conditions.

The Department has not carried out any recent studies concerning the employment of children in England. Information is not collected centrally on the number of children employed in England.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 November 1991

TRANSPORT

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of the achievements of his Department since October 1990.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department has continued to ensure that Britain's growing transport needs are met with regard to safety, efficiency and with proper respect for the environment.

Serious road casualties have continued to fall. In particular, road deaths in the year ending June 1991 were at their lowest level since 1948, despite a ninefold increase in the volume of traffic in the intervening period. We are continuing to promote greater transport safety through regulation, publicity and investment. The Road Traffic Act has reformed road traffic law in the light of the North report and will ensure that bad driving and drink driving are properly punished. The law on the wearing of seat belts has been extended to passengers travelling in the rear seats of cars. We have enhanced our road safety publicity campaigns under the "Safety on the Move" umbrella, notably on drinking and driving and child road safety. For the first time, expenditure of over £30 million was specifically earmarked in the 1991-92 transport supplementary grant settlement for low-cost safety schemes.

Increasing sums are also being spent on improving the safety of public transport. British Rail plans to spend over £200 million on specific safety measures during the current year and London Underground plans to spend over £80 million this year on further safety improvements. We have helped to secure international agreement at the International Maritime Organisation to improvements in standards for ro-ro ferries, oil tankers and bulk carriers. Under the powers in the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990, measures have been introduced for the first time for the security of passenger shipping. Existing aviation security measures have been strengthened and new ones are being developed. A new transport security division has been created within the Department, with enhanced resources.

Significant progress has been made towards the reduction of pollution from motor vehicles. Agreement has been reached in Brussels on substantially tougher emission standards for both cars and lorries. Since 1 November, thme annual MOT test has included a test on vehicle emissions.

Investment in transport infrastructure by both the public and private sectors is at historically high levels. The electrification of British Rail's east coast main line, at a cost of some £450 million, was completed in June 1991. British Rail invested more than £800 million in total in 1990-91—the highest in real terms in a single year since the transition from steam to diesel in the 1960s—and is expected to invest over £1 billion in the current year. London Underground investment, currently running at about £450 million a year, is also at record levels. The increased EFLs for 1992-93 announced in the autumn statement—£2,040 million for BR and £1,210 million for LT—are further evidence of the Government's commitment to the railways.

Provision for national trunk roads and motorways is being maintained at over £2 billion a year and has been more than doubled since 1988-89. The opening of the M40 extension to Birmingham in January 1991, and of the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford in May 1991, closed important gaps in the English motorway network. Since October 1990, we have opened over 150 miles of new or improved trunk roads, including 15 new bypasses.

We have continued to take steps to encourage an enhanced role for the private sector in the provision of transport infrastructure. The new Queen Elizabeth II bridge between Dartford and Thurrock was financed and constructed entirely by the private sector. The New Roads and Street Works Act has introduced new procedures for the authorisation of privately financed roads. We have announced our choice of concessionaire for the Birmingham northern relief road.

To encourage private sector participation in the railways, I have written to the chairman of British Rail asking BR to respond positively to reasonable proposals from the private sector to run new passenger and freight services, to charge fairly for the use of railway facilities and to allow private operators to use their own locomotives and train crew if they wish.

We have secured the passage of legislation to enable trust ports to move into the private sector and a number of them are now seeking to do so.

The Government have remained at the forefront of moves to liberalise the provision of air transport services, both within the European Community and through bilateral arrangements with other countries around the world. Since March 1991, airlines have been better able to match services at Heathrow to the needs of passengers, following our removal of most of the traffic distribution rules governing access to the airport.

A45

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 426-27, if he will list the number of days on which portions of the carriageways of the A45 between Bury St. Edmunds and Newmarket and Bury St. Edmunds and Stowmarket have been closed for purposes of routine maintenance and work by public utilities.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investigations he or the transport and road research laboratory, made of the cases where a blind spot in a rear view mirror has *(a)* caused or *(b)* was a potential factor in any road accident.

Mr. Chope: It is only possible to identify the rear-view mirror blind spot reliably as being a contributory factor to an accident when vehicles are reversing. A Transport and Road Research Laboratory study of such accidents

involving fatalities and serious injuries shows that a majority are caused by error or negligence, but that rear view blind spots are also a factor in most cases.

SS Richard Montgomery

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement indicating the frequency of surveys undertaken on the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery close to the Isle of Sheppey; what are the current measures being taken to protect the wreck; and if he has any plans to review the policy of maintaining these measures and otherwise leaving the wreck undisturbed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The site of this dangerous wreck is designated as a prohibited area under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973. It has been clearly marked as such on charts, and by notices attached to the wreck. A notice to mariners has also been issued designating the site as a foul area where trespassers are liable to prosecution.

A number of surveys have been carried out in the wreck. Following expert advice, the last two surveys have been at roughly five-year intervals. As my hon. Friend is aware, the most recent survey was completed by September this year and I hope to make a statement as soon as we have reached conclusions about the findings.

Road Flooding

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the placing of roadside advertisements with the slogan "road ahead flooded"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have received a copy of a complaint made to the Advertising Standards Authority about this advertisement.

Air France

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he is making to the European Commission's Transport Commissioner Karel van Miert to block a French Government subsidy of £200 million to Air France.

Mr. McLoughlin: No formal representations were invited on this particular issue and I made none; but I continue to press the Commissioner for a report which he has promised on the whole issue of state aids in air transport.

WALES

Vale Royal Porcelain Ltd

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any assistance was given to Vale Royal Porcelain Ltd., when the company moved from Stoke on Trent to Wrexham; and whether the company is currently in receipt of grant aid or other assistance from his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: The company was entitled to and received regional development grant.

Relocation Assistance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he carries out of the financial viability of companies before providing them with relocation assistance.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 19 November 1991. Similar procedures operate in my Department.

Mathematics Teaching

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to take to improve the teaching of mathematics in primary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is in the process of implementing a national curriculum for mathematics in primary schools. The curriculum is aimed at improving standards, including basic mthematical skills. Pupils between the ages of five and nine are currently being taught the curriculum and from August 1993 it will apply to all primary school pupils.

The results of the first national curriculum tests for mathematics of seven-year-olds show that 74 per cent. of pupils have reached the expected standard (level 2) or higher. These results are encouraging but there is scope for further improving basic mathematical skills. Advice has been sought from the School Examinations and Assessment Council on the detail of the results. Once this is available my right hon. Friend and I will decide what further guidance teachers might require.

Copies of the bulletin giving details of the test results have been sent to all primary school headteachers and directors of education so that they can make their own comparisons of performance and to ensure that standards in their schools are kept under regular review.

Her Majesty's inspectorate (Wales), as part of its ongoing programme of inspection of individual schools, will look closely at the standards of teaching in mathematics. Where the inspectorate report unacceptably low standards the local education authority will be asked about the improvements it proposes to make.

Grant support will continue to be made available to assist local education authorities in 1992-93 to provide training and support to teachers implementing the national curriculum, including the mathematics curriculum.

Careers Teaching

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that each secondary school in Wales has a full-time careers teacher.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities and schools to decide whether to appoint careers teachers to secondary schools.

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children sat the language assessment for key stage 1 in the standard assesment tasks *(a)* in English and *(b)* in Welsh in each of the local education authority areas in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Local Education Authority	Number of pupils assessed in the subjects of: English	[1] Welsh
Clwyd	4,079	514
Dyfed	2,441	1,625
Gwent	5,375	132
Gwynedd	400	2,267
Mid Glamorgan	6,369	813
Powys	1,211	167
South Glamorgan	4,804	297
West Glamorgan	4,084	403
Wales	28,763	6,218

[1] The assessment of Welsh in 1991 was not a statutory requirement and was tested on a pilot basis only.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children sat the language standard assessment task at key stage 1 in the current year in *(a)* English and *(b)* Welsh at each individual primary school in Dyfed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has given an undertaking to headteachers, local education authorities and teachers' unions that no data collected on the national curriculum key stage 1 assessments for 1991 will be published by the Department at individual school level.

Poll Tax (Non-payment)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost involved in centrally collecting information of the numbers of people in arrears for the poll tax for 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have not estimated the cost involved in centrally collecting information on the numbers of people in arrears for community charge. The department collects information from charging authorities on the amounts of community charge received and outstanding.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he considered that the proposed Cardiff bay barrage required an environment impact assessment to be carried out in accordance with articles 5 to 10 of European Council directive 85/337/EEC.

Mr. David Hunt: The directive indicates that it is not applied to "projects the details of which are adopted by specific acts of national legislation, since the objectives of this directive, including that of supplying information, are achieved through the legislative process". However, in accordance with Standing Orders, an environmental statement has been supplied and published, and while article 7 is not considered to be relevant in this case, it is clearly right that in its consideration of the Bill, Parliament should assess the environmental effects of the project in accordance with the provisions of the directive identified in the question.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia (Arms Embargo)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet other EC partners to discuss an arms embargo on the sale of all arms and military equipment to Indonesia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now review his policy on the introduction of an embargo on the sales of arms and military equipment to Indonesia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. Our policy remains as stated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his answer of 18 March.

EC Treaty Provisions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on how each EC Government and national assembly plan to implement and approve the legislation to enact treaty provisions on political, economic and monetary union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article 236 of the treaty of Rome requires that any amendments to the treaty be ratified by all member states in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. These vary between member states and in many cases will depend on the content of the new treaties agreed at Maastricht.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken concerning the continental shelf around the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The question of oil in the south Atlantic, specifically in the continental shelf off Patagonia and around the Falkland Islands, has been receiving increasing attention in recent years. Her Majesty's Government have been in contact with the Falkland Islands Government on the matter.

Having considered proposals by the Falkland Islands Government, my right hon. Friend has instructed the Governor of the Falkland Islands to take the necessary legislative measures to provide for the exercise of the Crown's rights over the sea bed and the sub-soil of the continental shelf around the Falkland Island's.

In addition, an ordinance known as the Continental Shelf Bill 1991, will be laid before the Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands. Upon entry into force, this would allow seismic surveying to take place under licence in designated areas of the continental shelf.

Officials from the British and Argentine Governments will meet shortly to explore the scope for co-operation.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those topics and areas for discussion concerning Hong Kong at meetings of the Joint Liaison Group upon which there will be prior consultation with LEGCO.

Mr. Garel-Jones *[holding answer 21 November 1991]*: Under the terms of the joint declarations the proceedings of the joint liaison group (the main role of which is to conduct consultations on the implementation of the joint declaration and to discuss matters relating to the smooth transfer of government in 1997) are confidential unless the two sides agree otherwise. The joint declaration stipulates that the JLG shall play no part in the administration of Hong Kong before or after 1997. The implementation in Hong Kong of some agreements reached in the JLG requires new legislation or the provision of funds by the Legislative Council. The Hong Kong Government wish to build up a co-operative partnership with the council, and intend to provide members with all the information and explanations that they need to assess the Administration's policies.

Kenya

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations were made to the Government of Kenya about the recent suppression of dissidents.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government have constantly stressed the need to respect freedom of expression and the importance of outlets for legitimate dissent in Kenya. Immediately news of the arrest of the dissidents was received in London on 15 November, the Kenyan deputy high commissioner was summoned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and told of our concern. Parallel action was taken by our high commission in Nairobi. We hope that those arrested will be released immediately so that progress can be made on President Moi's expressed willingness to move towards multi-party democracy.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what estimate of eligibility on income grounds, by reference to a percentage of households and population, is made in relation to green form legal advice for 1979, 1989 and 1990 using the same methodology as adopted to produce the estimates for civil legal aid set out in table 3 of annex A to the consultation paper on eligibility for legal aid published in June 1991 by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Attorney-General: No estimates have been made of eligibility for green form legal advice and assistance. Eligibility for legal advice and assistance will be considered at a later stage of the Lord Chancellor's review of financial conditions for legal aid.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what is the current timetable for the review of legal aid announced by the Lord Chancellor on 13 November 1989; by what date under this timetable the review team intends to respond to submissions to its consultation on civil legal aid eligibility released in November 1991; what further consultations on what subjects are planned by the review team; and by what date the review team currently intends to complete its tasks.

The Attorney-General: Responses to the consultation paper on non-matrimonial civil legal aid are now being considered and proposals will be issued in the first half of 1992. It is expected that a consultation paper on the financial conditions for legal aid in criminal proceedings will be published in the summer of 1992 and that the review team will then begin work on legal aid for matrimonial and family matters and legal advice and assistance with the aim of completing its work in 1993.

Commercial Courts

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what plans the Government have to establish further commercial courts outside London.

The Attorney-General: The commercial court sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in London to hear disputes, mainly arising from the international commercial activities of the City of London.

Commercial lists have been established at Manchester and Liverpool comprising general commercial business cases. Further such lists in other parts of the country will be considered should local business communities demonstrate a need.

County Courts

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of county courts and district registries now have user committees.

The Attorney-General: Of 288 county courts and combined court centres (including part-time caller offices), 112 (39 per cent.) are at present covered by court user committees. Plans are in hand to cover a further 23 courts, bringing the percentage to 47 per cent.

Of 24 district registries, 13 (54 per cent.) are covered by court user committees. The percentage will increase to 75 per cent. when five further district registries are covered in the near future.

Bristol City Council (Judgment)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library a copy of the judgment R. *v.* Bristol City Council and Another, ex-parte Willsman and Another 17 October 1991.

The Attorney-General: I have, as requested, arranged for a copy of the judgment R *v.* Bristol City Council and Another, ex-parte Willsman and Another, 17 October 1991, to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Civil Actions

Dr. Godman: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the statutory provisions which set out the circumstances in which a person serving overseas with the United Kingdom armed forces or a member of the family of such an individual may raise a civil action in an English court concerning a criminal offence committed in a place outwith the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: By virtue of the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982, which gives effect to the Brussels convention on jurisdiction and the enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters, persons in another EC member state, including members of our armed forces, may sue in an English court in respect

of any wrongful act done to them, whether or not it constituted a criminal offence, if the defendant is domiciled in England and Wales.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current targets for his Department's offices in Wales for meeting *(a)* delivery and *(b)* accuracy of benefits administered.

Miss Widdecombe: The setting of targets for district offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants applied for grants or loans under the social fund during the financial year 1990-91 in each of the benefit offices in Wales; how many applications were turned down and for what reason; what was the average size of the grant, crisis loan or budgetary loan in the year; and if he will provide comparable figures for the first six months of 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefits Office, Neath

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the proposal to close the Neath branch of the Benefits Agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The operation of the network of Benefits Agency district offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 20 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *597*, on the gross cost of uprating the retirement pension by average earnings in each year since 1980-81 at 1991 prices.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 5 November 1991]:* The information is given in the table, based on 1991-92 prices.

It is only possible to estimate the net cost for the current year, 1991-92, in which it would have been £4·43 billion allowing for a reduction of £0·28 billion of income support; £0·26 billion of community charge benefit; and £0·72 billion of housing benefit.

Estimated extra cost of retirement pension with upratings in line with average earnings[1]

Financial year	*Gross cost (£ billion)*[2]
1980-81	0·13
1981-82	0·51
1982-83	0·64
1983-84	0·72
1984-85	1·37
1985-86	1·53
1986-87	2·41
1987-88	3·56
1988-89	4·35
1989-90	5·20
1990-91	5·65
1991-92	5·69

[1] Actual average earnings, whole economy.
[2] 1991-92 prices.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Statistics

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by English police authority *(a)* the population covered by that authority, *(b)* the police force establishment of that authority, *(c)* the total arrests made in that authority, *(d)* the number of arrests per officer, *(e)* the total number of reported crimes, *(f)* the number of crimes per officer, *(g)* the total number of crimes per 1,000 population and *(h)* the total number of unsolved crimes per 1,000 population.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is provided for 1990 in the table.

Crime, Population and Police Manpower, by English Police Authority

1990 (except where stated)

Police force	*Population mid-year 1989*	*Police manpower*	*Arrests (all offences)*	*Arrests per police officer*	*Recorded crime*[2]	*Crimes per police officer*	*Crimes per 1,000 population*	*Crimes not cleared-up 1,000 population*
Avon and Somerset	1,413,700	3,127	42,421	14	127,052	41	90	63
Bedfordshire	531,168	1,092	17,705	16	53,701	49	101	77
Cambridgeshire	655,047	1,211	18,389	15	44,565	37	68	42
Cheshire	958,562	1,937	27,823	14	55,462	29	58	27
Cleveland	552,836	1,516	26,584	18	73,878	49	134	96
Cumbria	491,627	1,217	19,479	16	33,344	27	68	37
Derbyshire	929,401	1,786	23,079	13	60,421	34	65	41
Devon and Cornwall	1,493,970	2,914	31,404	11	92,127	32	62	41
Dorset	656,827	1,308	17,487	13	47,912	37	73	47
Durham	596,928	1,401	25,965	19	54,406	39	91	56
Essex	1,464,129	2,940	39,990	14	95,924	33	66	46
Gloucestershire	529,494	1,179	17,043	14	42,394	36	80	53
Greater Manchester	2,582,384	7,134	116,678	16	338,591	47	131	82

Police force	Population mid-year 1989	Police manpower	Arrests (all offences)	Arrests per police officer	Recorded crime [2]	Crimes per police officer	Crimes per 1,000 population	Crimes not cleared-up 1,000 population
Hampshire	1,676,412	3,230	63,171	20	120,329	37	72	47
Hertfordshire	840,560	1,689	22,648	13	46,339	27	55	38
Humberside	856,250	2,020	36,066	18	104,467	52	122	74
Kent	1,523,673	3,056	47,007	15	103,301	34	68	49
Lancashire	1,390,794	3,257	57,235	18	108,273	33	78	37
Leicestershire	891,926	1,817	24,949	14	72,784	40	82	52
Lincolnshire	586,855	1,236	21,474	17	39,187	32	67	37
City of London	4,267	815	4,809	6	7,100	9	[3]—	[3]—
Merseyside	1,447,983	4,771	69,207	14	139,208	29	96	50
Metropolitan Police District	7,223,077	28,278	[1]116,865	[1]4	834,324	30	116	93
Norfolk	748,501	1,416	22,727	16	54,625	39	73	45
Northamptonshire	576,059	1,168	18,242	16	48,119	41	84	53
Northumbria	1,431,721	3,595	65,694	18	203,825	57	142	79
North Yorkshire	722,305	1,406	20,221	14	46,252	33	64	37
Nottinghamshire	1,014,822	2,377	45,468	19	133,166	56	131	83
South Yorkshire	1,295,191	3,031	43,979	15	107,314	35	83	44
Staffordshire	1,038,990	2,229	36,861	17	72,513	33	70	41
Suffolk	641,029	1,221	13,905	11	37,743	31	59	34
Surrey	743,803	1,690	20,920	12	42,579	25	57	41
Sussex	1,416,690	3,048	37,358	12	94,914	31	67	49
Thames Valley	1,960,401	3,765	59,098	16	148,025	39	76	55
Warwickshire	483,060	1,039	13,161	13	32,903	32	68	47
West Mercia	1,078,501	2,063	32,285	16	62,937	30	58	30
West Midlands	2,615,409	7,030	123,868	18	264,769	38	101	63
West Yorkshire	2,066,609	5,371	84,172	16	236,012	44	114	73
Wiltshire	558,395	1,193	14,507	12	33,578	28	60	33

[1] Arrests figures on notifiable offences only.
[2] Crime figures relate to notifiable offences recorded by the police.
[3] Not applicable.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates would be accommodated by the cells which are not in use at London prisons due to work taking place on the installation of an internal sanitation system within those prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: On Tuesday 19 November there were 351 cells out of use in London local prisons and remand centres because of work to install integral sanitation. The certified normal accommodation for these cells is 351, but if they were to be used at previous levels of overcrowding some 412 prisoners would be accommodated.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures will be taken to ensure that private prison staff will be checked for suitability and be trained to the same standard as Her Majesty's prison service standards.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 requires the director and other custodial staff of any contracted out prison to be certified by the Secretary of State as prisoner custody officers. The Act further provides that the Secretary of State may issue a certificate only if he is satisfied that they are fit and proper persons and have received training from the contractor to the approved standard.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the regulations in the code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures relating to the temperatures at which old and new world primates should be kept, to reflect the fact that these groups of primates include species which come from widely different climates.

Mrs. Rumbold: The code of practice, which was based closely on guidelines produced by the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, sets out optimal room temperature ranges for new world primates and old world primates used in scientific procedures. These temperature ranges are considered to meet the welfare needs of the animals and we have no plans to review them.

Special Branch

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to whom prison-based special branch operations are accountable.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The direction and control of all police operations is a matter for the chief officer of the police force concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to review the nature of special branch operations in England and Wales, and in particular the accountability of such operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no plans to do so. The conduct of police operations is a matter for the chief constable of the police force concerned.

Overseas Voters

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his Department's advertising campaign to encourage the

registration of overseas voters, including the total amount spent so far and the number of overseas voters who have registered as a result.

Mrs. Rumbold: No advertising or publicity to inform British citizens abroad of their voting rights was undertaken by the Home Office this year, apart from the updating of posters used in British diplomatic posts abroad at a cost of £1,400. We shall make known to the House in due course the number of overseas electors included on the draft electoral register for 1992-93.

Brixton Prison (Escapes)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what parts of Judge Tumim's report to him regarding the recent gaol escape from Brixton were not published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons advised me that for reasons of security he believed that much of his report could not be published, and that to publish it as it stood would endanger the remaining security at Brixton and the safety of individuals. I concurred with that view and published those parts which Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons considered could be published.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the July 1991 Brixton escapees had or were made aware of any drawings or plans of the prison by any member of the prison staff;

(2) who authorised the activities organised by Staffordshire police in Brixton gaol in late 1990 and early 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The allegations on which the questions appear to be based fall to be considered by Mr. Colin Bailey, whose appointment was announced by the chief constable of Staffordshire on 20 November.

Poll Tax (Non-payment)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have now been taken to court and convicted for non-payment of the poll tax in England and Wales; how many have received prison sentences; how many have turned up on court to argue their cases; how many hours of court time have been involved and, based on the average cost per hour of a magistrates court, at what cost to public funds.

Mr. John Patten: During the period 1 April 1990 to 30 September 1991 magistrates courts in England and Wales made 5·7 million community charge liability orders and issued 2,788 warrants committing non-payers to prison; 23,456 court sitting hours were devoted to community charge enforcement at an estimated cost of about £5 million.

Prison Security

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the Lakes and Hadfield review of prison security.

Mrs. Rumbold: As I indicated yesterday, my right hon. Friend has recently received from Chief Constable Hadfield and Mr. Lakes the report of their audit of custody arrangements for category A prisoners and of their inquiry into DOC1 division in prison service headquarters, and is considering it. He hopes to publish a summary in due course.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number of police officers deployed in the vicinity of Wandsworth gaol on 7 July.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the commissioner that two inspectors, two sergeants and 20 police constables were deployed in the vicinity of Wandsworth prison on 7 July 1991.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of crimes which have occurred but which have not been reported to the police during the last 12 months.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* The fourth British crime survey, fieldwork for which will be in early 1992, will provide an estimate for 1991. Some types of crime are not covered by the survey, such as those where the victim is an organisation or institution, rather than an individual.

Satellite Broadcasting (Pornographic Material)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to make representations to his opposite numbers in the EC to prevent pornographic material being transmitted from foreign-owned satellites and broadcast by cable into United Kingdom households; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* I have no such plans. The EC Directive on Transfrontier Broadcasting includes standards of taste and decency.

NATIONAL FINANCE

British Telecom

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the eight retail institutions undertaking the sale of BT shares the body which regulates their share-selling capacity.

Mr. Maude: The regulatory bodies that regulate the conduct of the selected retailers investment business are listed on page 47 of the prospectus for the British Telecommunications plc offer for sale which was published on 21 November. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Hospital Car Service

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions have taken place with volunteer drivers of the hospital car service in Devon regarding taxation of the hospital car service mileage allowance.

Mr. Maude: The position is that motor mileage allowances paid to volunteer drivers who use a car on

health service business are liable to tax to the extent that the allowances exceed the costs of running and maintaining the car for the miles travelled for the health service and so result in a profit. Letters have been sent to individual drivers explaining the position and setting out arrangements which will enable drivers, if they wish, to read off the approximate profit figure, if any, from tables calculated by the Inland Revenue. Alternatively, drivers can calculate their taxable profits themselves by reference to the actual mileage payments they receive and their actual expenses.

I understand that the Inland Revenue has not held any formal discussions with volunteer drivers in Devon on this matter, but the letters to which I have referred suggested that drivers should contact their tax offices if they were unclear about their tax position, and I am told that the Inland Revenue has responded to a number of such inquiries.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider building an exceptional depreciation allowance into the mileage rates applied to the voluntary drivers of the hospital car service.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue's "tax-free" mileage rates already include an allowance for depreciation. These rates are used in a voluntary, administrative arrangement designed by the Inland Revenue to reduce record keeping for health authorities and volunteer drivers, but it is open to drivers to choose to have any profit element in their mileage allowances taxed on the strict statutory basis if they believe the Revenue's "tax-free" rates do not cover their expenses. However, in that case, drivers must keep records of all their motoring costs and miles driven, both privately and for the hospital car service, to enable the actual profit to be calculated and charged to tax in the normal way.

Privatised Industries

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the net average annual financial contribution to the Exchequer, for the 10-year period before their privatisation, of each nationalised industry privatised over the last 10 years.

Mr. Maude: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information that is readily available, including information on the major nationalised industries' external financial requirements since 1978-79, is published in chapter 6 of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement"—Cm. 1520.

VAT

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made since his announcement of the introduction of monthly VAT returns for the largest VAT payers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In his announcement on 21 October, at columns *317-18*, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer advised that business representatives would be consulted on the details of this change.

Customs and Excise has now produced a consultation paper, which has been issued initially to some 57 trade associations, representatives bodies and individual businesses, including the 17 members of the joint VAT consultation committee. A copy of the paper has been placed in the Library of the House.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what methods are being used to distribute a copy of the citizens charter to every home; what is the estimated cost of *(a)* preparing, *(b)* printing and *(c)* distributing it; how many copies have been printed; which commercial firms are being used for its distribution; by what process they were selected; which companies were appointed; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* Neither the White Paper on the "Citizen's Charter" — Cm. 1599—nor the accompanying short guide is being distributed to every home. Cm. 1599 is available, priced £8.50, from HMSO. The short guide is available free of charge. Details of preparation, printing and distribution costs were given in the Prime Minister's replies to the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for the Wrekin (Mr. [illegible]ott) on 25 July 1991, *Official Report*, columns *781-82*.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many additional staff have been employed on the preparation of the text of the citizens charter; at what cost; and from which budget these costs have been met.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* No additional staff were employed on the preparation of the text of the citizens charter. The work was done by civil servants from the central Departments as part of their normal duties.

"Competing for Quality"

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of producing the White Paper, "Competing for Quality"; and how much the Government expect to raise through sales of the White Paper.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer on 21 November 1991]:* The cost of printing, publishing and distribution were borne by HMSO which aims to recover these costs from the anticipated sales revenue of around £30,000. In addition, design costs of £10,700 were borne by HM Treasury.

HEALTH

HIV (Health Workers)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department is carrying out on the occurrence of stress and burnout, or related psychosocial morbidity, amongst health workers involved in the management of people with HIV infection and disease; what information he has as to levels of staff turnover, absenteeism and illness amongst such workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. However, a research proposal dealing with this question is currently being considered by the Department. No information on the levels of staff turnover, absenteeism and illness specifically among such workers is held centrally.

Asthma

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the role of oilseed rape in the causation of asthma.

Mr. Dorrell: Some individuals may be allergic to the pollen and other products of oilseed rape, as they may be to other crops and plants. However, there is no conclusive evidence of a link between oilseed rape and increased incidence of asthma. The Government have given financial support to a project based at Aberdeen university which is looking at possible effects on public health caused by oilseed rape. It will be some time before the results of the study are known.

Dental Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement after the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Baroness Hooper's meeting with dentists from Dorset, about the suspension of the national health service dental service for children;

(2) what steps he intends to take to ensure the continuation of national health service dental services for children in Dorset.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no question of national health service dental services for children being suspended in Dorset or anywhere else. Dorset has the second highest level of children registered with a dentist in England.

Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to amend the health service superannuation scheme to enable part-time staff to receive on retirement a pension entitlement equivalent to that paid to someone with the same total number of years service who has achieved that service in full-time employment.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to change the present arrangements. Pension benefits for full-time and part-time staff are calculated according to a common principle, which is standard pensions practice. Both are related to length of service and the amount of pay received at retirement. In practice, any part-time service is reduced to its equivalent full-time length and the pension calculated by reference to a notional whole-time rate of pay. To treat part-time officers as though they had worked full-time would be to credit them with service which had not been earned and for which no financial contribution had been made.

Scandinavian Airline

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the role of the Scandinavian airline SAS or its subsidiary SSP in the planning, finance and operating of the proposed obstetric and gynaecology unit in Liverpool.

Mr. Dorrell: Employees of SAS assisted clinical staff to formulate ideas about the model of care they wish to adopt in the proposed new unit. Following this, they provided design advice. There are no further financial links nor any operational agreements between SAS and the district health authority.

Childbirth

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has issued any guidance superseding the "Maternity Care in Action" document's advice that every mother should be encouraged to have her baby in a maternity unit.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Department's policy remains that, as unforeseen complications can occur in any birth, every mother should be encouraged to have her baby in a maternity unit where emergency facilities are readily available. However, women should be able to make an informed choice about where to have their baby and discuss the options available with their general practitioner, midwife and obstetrician. Advice is also contained in the pregnancy book.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on home confinements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our policy on home confinements is set out in section 2 of the memorandum on "Delivery" submitted by the Department in evidence to the Select Committee on Health—inquiry into maternity and neonatal services. The memorandum is contained in the minutes of evidence given to the Select Committee on 3 July 1991, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, reference HC 430-V. Paragraph 2.6 of the memorandum says

"Although the demand for home births is not great, health authorities should ensure that there are policies agreed between the professionals to provide mothers who do decide to have their babies at home with adequate antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care and that these arrangements are well known locally."

Redundancy

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what data are collected about the numbers of stasff made redundant each year in the national health service; if the figures are broken down by grade; and if he will make it his policy to publish them.

Mr. Dorrell: Data on redundancies in the national health service are not collected centrally, other than in respect of staff who are both over 50 years of age and have at least five years reckonable service for superannuation purposes. These data are not broken down by grade. The data are distributed within the national health service for internal management purposes. There are no plans for any wider publication.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of Health, pursuant to his answer, of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *656*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill what action he intends to take against the British Pregnancy Advisory Service over its advertisements appearing in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which circulates outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the magazine in question is printed and published in the United Kingdom. As with other magazines in the United Kingdom base, a very small proportion of copies, in this case well under 10 per cent., are sent overseas. We are satisfied that the form of the advertisement in question is

not directed at persons overseas. There has been a recent European court decision about the advertisement of abortion services and we shall be examining it to see if it has any implication for our condition of approval.

Deaths

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many men over 65 years and women aged over 60 years died in each month from July 1989 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of deaths for males aged 65 and over, and females aged 60 and over, by month of occurrence in England and Wales, July 1989 to December 1990

	Males 65 and over	*Females 60 and over*
1989		
July	15,795	20,030
August	15,294	19,134
September	15,486	19,032
October	17,030	21,366
November	18,087	22,539
December	27,909	37,589
1990[1]		
January	21,021	27,281
February	17,186	21,292
March	18,044	21,967
April	17,162	21,544
May	17,000	20,788
June	16,149	19,937
July	16,123	20,068
August	15,447	19,545
September	15,671	19,058
October	16,935	20,755
November	17,165	21,117
December	20,517	25,432

[1] 1990 figures are provisional.

Medical Defence Insurance

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether general practitioners are required to provide their own medical defence insurance; and what allowance for the cost of their premiums is made in (i) the remuneration received by doctors and (ii) the way they are taxed.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* General medical and general dental practitioners are not required by the Department to take out their own medical defence insurance, but would be expected to do so in their own interests. Subscriptions to medical defence organisations are taken into account along with other practice expenses when determining the provision to be made for expenses within the GP remuneration system, and are an allowable expense for taxation purposes.

Terrapins

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice the public health laboratory service has given on terrapin importation on health grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The public health laboratory service (PHLS) has advised that on the available evidence imported terrapins kept as pets do not pose a significant public health problem in England and Wales.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions the occurrence of salmonellosis from pet terrapins in the United Kingdom has been identified by the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The public health laboratory service (PHLS) division of enteric pathogens, which receives laboratory isolates of salmonella from human and non-human sources for detailed identification, has in the past recorded family outbreaks of salmonellosis in households where the same serotype of salmonella has been identified from terrapin tank water. The most recent occasion on which this occurred was in 1979. Since 1979 to date, there have been three occasions (two in 1981 and one in 1982) where the same serotype has been identified in a sporadic case and in water taken from a terrapin tank.

The PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre, which receives laboratory-confirmed reports of human infections, recorded in the period 1986-90 a total of 3,512 outbreaks of salmonellosis. Two of these outbreaks affected people in households where terrapins were kept as pets. However, as no microbiological evidence was reported, the presence of the terrapins could have been coincidental.

Notes:

1. An outbreak represents two or more related laboratory confirmed salmonella infections in humans of whom at least one was ill.
2. A sporadic case is a single case apparently unrelated to other cases.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has received from the public health laboratory service concerning the implications for the United Kingdom of United States data for salmonellosis contamination from imported terrapins.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The following table shows the total number of laboratory confirmed infections of salmonella reported to the public health laboratory service (PHLS) communicable disease surveillance centre in 1989 and 1990, together with the number of reports received for those salmonella serotypes cited in the past in the United States as being associated with terrapins. The public health laboratory service advises that these serotypes are rare in the United Kingdom and, as can be seen from the table, their numbers declined between 1989 and 1990. Therefore given the available evidence it is difficult to conclude that United States data can be applied to the United Kingdom.

Laboratory reports to the public health laboratory services communicable disease surveillance centre of all and selected salmonellas in faeces (cases and excreters) England and Wales 1989 and 1990

Salmonella serotype	*Laboratory reports of faecal isolates to communicable disease surveillance centre*	
	1989	*1990*
All Salmonella	24,649	25,351
S.java	29	29
S.arizonae	8	5
S.poona	8	5

Salmonella serotype	Laboratory reports of faecal isolates to communicable disease surveillance centre 1989	1990
S.litchfield	6	3
S.cubana	5	9
S.bispebjerg	1	0

Notes:

1. None of the above reports stated an association with terrapins.
2. One other report of a salmonella (S.typhimurium in 1989) stated an association with terrapins. Further investigation revealed the tank water to be negative, so the finding may have been a chance one.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of people employed in bus manufacture for each year since 1980.

Mr. Jackson: There are no separate estimates available for the bus manufacturing industry. The following tables give estimates of employees in employment for each year from 1980, for motor vehicles and their engines, motor vehicle bodies, trailers and caravans, in which bus manufacturing is included.

SIC groups 351-352

June	Great Britain unadjusted for seasonal variations Thousands
1980	230·3
1981	191·8
1982	166·3
1983	165·4
1984	157·3
1985	156·8
1986	155·5
1987	154·6
1988	162·9
1989	160·9
1990	153·7
1991	139·1

Earnings

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in the United Kingdom are paid below 68 per cent. of all full-timers' mean earnings; and how many of them are *(a)* women and *(b)* part-time workers.

Mr. Forth: From the 1991 new earnings survey (NES), it is estimated that 68 per cent. of average (mean) gross hourly earnings of all full-time employees in April 1991 was £4·76. It is further estimated, using the NES and estimates of the number of employees in employment, that a little over 9 million employees in Great Britain earned below this amount. A little under 6 million of these employees were women, and just over 4 million were part-time workers.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated percentage of gross national product that will be spent on overseas aid for the planning years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: The figure in the autumn statement for the aid budget in the current financial year is 0·30 per cent. of the estimate of GDP. Estimates for future years are not available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

School Meals

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his plans to set up a committee to create nutritional guidelines for school meals; what its term of reference and membership will be; and when it will be expected to report.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to set up another committee. The matter is being considered already by the catering working group set up jointly by my Department, the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority. I am also expecting to meet representatives of the school meals campaign in the near future.

SCOTLAND

Crofting

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value in real terms of current crofting grant and loan support when set against a base line of 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Grant and loan support for crofters is available through the crofters building grants and loans scheme (CBGLS). In real terms since 1979, the maximum grant and loan available to eligible applicants has increased by 31 per cent. in the case of assistance for new housing and 13 per cent. for assistance towards improvement works.

Social Work Department, Fife

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the most recent approaches made by his Department to Sheriff Kearney in relation to the anticipated receipt and publication by his Department of the report into the operations of the social work department of Fife region, indicating the response and the number of days which the sheriff has taken to prepare and finish his report together with the costs of his Department and others involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since May 1990 we have corresponded on a number of occasions with Sheriff Kearney about progress on his report and a likely completion date. In his most recent response last month he indicated that he was unable to give a firm date.

The costs of the inquiry directly borne by the Scottish Office to date amount to some £600,000. I have no information on the costs incurred by others involved.

Rural Enterprise Programme

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current percentage level of take-up under the rural enterprise programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current estimates of expenditure in 1991-92 are still subject to uncertainty, but it seems likely that expenditure on the rural enterprise programme will be about £1·8 million, as against the Vote provision of £3 million. This is partly attributable to a delay in the EC Commission's approval of the programme and to the submission of more modest projects than expected. The extension of the REP's business development scheme to new areas, announced on 11 November, should ensure that available resources in future are fully utilised.

Foresterhill Hospital

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of preparing business plans for directly managed unit and national health service trust status for Foresterhill hospital in Aberdeen; how much was met directly by Grampian health board; how much was met by the Scottish Home and Health Department; and how much was met by the university of Aberdeen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* As I made clear to the hon. Member on 8 February 1991 at column *288*, the cost of preparing the business plan, from which experience other boards and units will benefit, was £156,000 of which £100,000 was met from additional funds held by my Department for this purpose, £41,000 by Grampian health board from resources provided to institute NHS reform and £15,000 from the university of Aberdeen.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of the consultation exercise for the Foresterhill hospital national health service trust application; what cost fell directly to Grampian health board from its ordinary budget; how much additional funding was provided by the Scottish Home and Health Department; and if he will publish a detailed account of the expenditure, including printing and other expenses.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The total cost was £60,102·39. This covered the preparation, printing and distribution of the application documents as well as the leaflets prepared following a suggestion made to the trust sponsors at a meeting with Aberdeen district council. The costs were met from a specific allocation of £10,000 from my Department with the remainder funded from resources made available to the board to implement NHS reforms.

National Curriculum

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce his decision on the final location of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum is currently preparing an assessment of its accommodation needs, in accordance with arrangements agreed in March 1988. Meanwhile the Government's position remains as described in my letter of 17 March 1988 to the chairman of the governors of Northern college which stated that the location of the council's offices would be reviewed after three years and which expressed the expectation that the business of the council would then become centralised on the Dundee premises of the college. My right hon. Friend expects to receive the council's views shortly, and to make a decision on the matter at an early date thereafter.

ENVIRONMENT

North Sea Conference

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress there has been in implementing the recommendations of the 1990 North sea conference.

Mr. Trippier: In July last year we published a guidance note on how we intended to implement the measures agreed at the Third North Sea Conference which was held in the Hague in March 1990. We were the first North sea state to do so and I am pleased to be able to report good progress in taking forward these matters.

Contaminants entering the North sea through rivers are the most significant pollutant. We are making good progress towards meeting agreed reductions of inputs of substances that are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate. We have completed this year our part of a comparative international data collection exercise on river inputs organised by the Paris Commission. This shows reductions between 1985 and 1990 in inputs to the North sea, through United Kingdom rivers, for example of 51 per cent. and 61 per cent. for mercury and cadmium and of 30 per cent for Lindane.

The Hague declaration also seeks tighter controls on pesticides. The Government have substantially increased scientific resources available for evaluation of existing and new pesticides. Of the 18 pesticides listed in the declaration whose use must be strictly limited or banned, recent decisions on chlordane, mercury compounds and fluoroactive acid mean that 14 are no longer in use or are being phased out. Of the remaining four: atrazine is currently under review by the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides; a European Community directive agreed last year bans the use of pentachlorophenol except by special authorisation for treatment of dry rot in timber, and in limited industrial applications where emissions are controlled; Quintozene and Chloropicrin are used in very small quantities but will be reviewed as part of the pesticide evaluation programme.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been a particular concern in the marine environment especially in relation to marine mammals. The conference agreed to phase out remaining uses and carry out their destruction in an environmentally acceptable form by 1999. The Department of the Environment has been working with industry to assess totals of PCB waste arisings in different industrial sectors and to develop new guidance on their safe disposal. This should be issued for consultation as a draft waste management paper next year.

On sewage discharges, the water industry has expanded and accelerated its ten year investment programme to improve bathing waters. Some 40 schemes will now include additional treatment at an estimated cost of £600 million. We also welcome the adoption by the European Community of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive which encompasses our announcement at the time of the North Sea Conference that we aim to treat all significant discharges of sewage before discharge to coastal waters.

We have said that the disposal of sewage sludge at sea will end by 1998 at the latest. All bodies currently licensed to undertake this activity have now reported their plans to introduce alternative methods. The first disposal licences will be terminated by the end of 1993, five years ahead of the target. In the main these early terminations will result in the beneficial re-use of sludge either as a fertiliser or composting agent.

In line with North Sea Conference decisions, we have also been looking carefully at licences to dispose of liquid industrial waste at sea. We have sought to phase out this activity as soon as satisfactory land based alternatives become available. The number of licences granted for this disposal route has been cut from 24 in 1987 to just two today. We do not intend to renew these after 1992. This has required substantial investment on the part of industry. In particular, Sterling Organics and ICI have invested £5 million and £25 million respectively in innovative technology to treat and recycle wastes currently disposed of at sea. In addition National Power, who currently have a licence to dispose of flyash at sea, have also invested in new plant to produce concrete blocks. This will be coming on stream next year. We do not expect to extend their disposal licence beyond the end of 1992.

With regard to operational discharges from ships, the International Maritime Organisation agreed in September this year, subject to adoption by signatory states, to accept a proposal by North Sea states for lower limits for oil discharges to apply to all ships on a global basis. Similar action on chemical discharges is being considered. In addition, the Department of Transport is consulting the United Kingdom shipping and ports industries and related interests on the introduction of annex IV of the MARPOL Convention on sewage discharges from ships.

In the offshore oil and gas industry the disposal of discarded oil-based drilling cuttings was identified as the main source of pollution from exploration and appraisal wells. Our action plan to minimise this pollution by prohibiting the discharge of oil based mud cuttings by 1994 was this year submitted to, and accepted by, the Paris Commission group on oil pollution. Research and field testing on new mud systems and cleaning techniques have continued and early indications are that these should attract practical application by the industry.

We have also continued to give a high priority to support for the work of the North sea task force through the research programmes of a number of Departments. The results of this work, which includes studies on seals, dolphins and seabirds and better understanding of the links between inputs of contaminants, their distribution and effects, will be reflected in the 1993 quality status report on the North sea. Recently completed projects have included an atlas of North sea rainfall, by remote sensing, which will enable a more accurate assessment to be made of atmospheric pollutant inputs.

Finally, as a result of a British initiative, the Hague declaration extended the scope of North sea conferences to include the protection of marine wildlife. We announced our intention last year to develop proposals for marine consultation areas in England and Wales which will include Government guidelines addressed to marine agencies. Early in 1992 we intend to issue a consultation document which will contain a first list of proposed sites. We will also review existing legislation in relation to marine conservation. In addition we have strongly supported efforts to develop an agreement to protect small cetaceans in the North and Baltic seas under the United Nations Bonn convention on migratory species. The text of such an agreement was successfully concluded in Geneva in September this year and adopted by 6 North sea states and the European Community. An offer by the Government to host the Agreement's Secretariat at the United Kingdom's sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council was very favourably received.

Harrogate Borough Council

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total tabulated receipts from the disposal of properties so far in the current financial year by Harrogate borough council.

Mr. Yeo: Harrogate borough council has reported the sale of 26 dwellings between April and September 1991.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce standard spending assessments for local education, social services, and fire and police services.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the rate support grant and capping criteria for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement on the reason for the delay in making the announcement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what increase of uniform business rate he proposes to make for 1992.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 6 November 1991 at column *158* to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves).

Homeless Families

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of homeless families living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England at the end of June, in each of the years 1985 to 1991, inclusive.

Mr. Yeo: Estimates of the number of households who were being dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act and temporarily placed in bed and breakfast accommodation are in the table.

	Households at 1 June
1985	4,590
1986	6,950
1987	10,920
1988	11,270
1989	11,720
1990	12,170
1991	13,330

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what further steps he is considering to help statutorily homeless familes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness to date of his Department's homeless initiative to reduce the need for local authorities to use bed-and-breakfast hotels as temporary accommodation for homeless families;

(3) how many of the additional units of accommodation to be provided under his Department's homelessness initiative will be local authority empty dwellings refurbished for letting to homeless families.

Mr. Yeo: A total of £300 million has been made available to local authorities and housing associations in London and the south east in 1990-91 and 1991-92 to provide accommodation for homeless families. We expect these funds to produce some 16,000 homes if local authorities and housing associations achieve the outputs which they have told us they will. My Department considers that the outputs projected represent good value for money for the resources committed to the initiative.

The extent to which the accommodation provided reduces the use of bed and breakfast by local authorities depends on a number of factors, including the level of homelessness acceptances and local authority management decisions. A condition of the allocation of resources under this initiative is that the properties provided should be used for homeless families.

According to information reported by local authorities for 1990-91 and estimates for 1991-92, over 6,800 of the 16,000 homes made available through this initiative will be refurbished local authority voids.

We have consulted the local authority associations, through the Housing Consultative Council, on a proposal that in the future allocation of capital resources for housing, the weightings given to homelessness and temporary accommodation should be significantly increased. Decisions will be announced soon.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of vacant local authority dwellings in England at 1 April in each of the years 1985 to 1990, inclusive, other than those which are awaiting or undergoing major works or awaiting sale or demolition.

Mr. Yeo: The information derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns is shown in the table.

Local authority empty dwellings, excluding those awaiting or undergoing major works or awaiting sale or demolition: England 1 April

Year		
1985	[1]n.a	(94,000)
1986	[1]n.a	(91,100)
1987	61,800	(92,500
1988	57,800	(87,200)
1989	62,700	(85,700)
1990	60,500	(84,300

[1] not available—figures in brackets for these and later years show empty dwellings excluding those awaiting sale or demolition only.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made on the east Thames corridor.

Mr. Heseltine: I have today appointed Llewelyn-Davies Planning to undertake the study into the development capacity of the east Thames corridor which I announced on 10 October. The broad terms of reference for that study have already been placed in the Library. I have also had a first meeting with the leaders of the local authorities in the corridor.

Local Government (Consultation)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following publication of his Department's consultative document, "The Role of Local Government".

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* A list of the respondents to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in England" and copies of the responses were placed in the Library of the House on 14 October. The Department has received about 300 responses so far to the consultation paper "The Internal Management of Local Authorities in England". We have not published a consultation paper entitled "The Role of Local Government".

Direct Services Organisation (Crawley)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the operation of the direct services organisation of Crawley borough council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* Crawley borough council has made representations in response to notices served on it under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988, in relation to its direct service organisation's failure to meet the specified financial objective in carrying out other catering work in 1989-90, and vehicle maintenance work and refuse collection in 1990-91. My right hon. Friend is considering these responses.

Leasing

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following the publication of his Department's consultative document, "The Housing Revenue Account and Short Term Leasing".

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* My Department received some 60 responses to the consultation paper on short-term leasing issued on 3 May 1991, including 50 from local authorities or their associations. Following this consultation exercise, the Minister for Housing announced decisions on the future of short-term leasing in answer to a written parliamentary question on 23 May, including the decision in principle to make available a transitional specific grant. On 14 November my Department wrote to all local housing authorities seeking views on arrangements for the distribution of the specific grant.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements exist to enable any hon. Member to obtain copies of the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors' reports which have been given to trade associations but not published.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Directors and Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will provide a table showing the number of directors and auditors who have been disqualified following their criticism in the Department of Trade and Industry's inspectors' reports since 1985;

(2) how many company directors and auditors have been disqualified from acting as directors and auditors, as a result of reports by the Department of Trade and Industry's inspectors.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 1 November at columns *618-20*.

On 31 October 1991 a five-year disqualification order under section 8 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 was made against Mr. John Wallrock, who was criticised in the inspectors' report into Minet Holdings plc and WMD Underwriting Agencies Limited, which has been published.

So far as I am aware, no auditor criticised in an inspector's report has been debarred from auditing as a result of information in that report.

Auditing Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that following the criticism of an auditing firm by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors, the standards of that firm would always be investigated.

Mr. Redwood: Whenever an auditing firm is criticised in a report by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors, a copy of that report is disclosed to the relevant supervisory body. It is for that body to decide what action to take.

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the differences between the investigations carried out by his Department and by the Serious Fraud Office.

Mr. Redwood: Under the Companies Act, where there is good reason, the Department of Trade and Industry investigates complaints about companies: these inquiries are essentially fact-finding.

The SFO is a criminal enforcement agency which investigates and prosecutes cases of suspected serious and complex criminal fraud whether or not they concern companies.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the period within which the recognised supervisory bodies will be able to make at least one monitoring visit to the auditing firms.

Mr. Redwood: The three Institutes of Chartered Accountants intend to conduct a routine monitoring visit each year to a fifth of their members who audit listed companies, together with a random sample of, initially, 150 other firms. The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants intends to conduct a routine monitoring visit at least once every five years to all individuals and firms registered with it, together with those registered with the Association of Authorised Public Accountants, under the terms of arrangements between those bodies. All the recognised supervisory bodies have also made provision for special monitoring visits in response to complaints. The bodies will, jointly with my Department, review the operation of the monitoring arrangements in 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide a complete list of the bodies which he has recognised as supervisory bodies or qualifying bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has approved, for the purposes of section 31(4) of the Companies Act 1989, qualifications offered by

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales;
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland;
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland; and
The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants.

His present intention is that qualifications offered by those bodies should also be recognised under schedule 12 to that Act. He has recognised those bodies, together with the Association of Authorised Public Accountants, as supervisory bodies for the purposes of part II of that Act.

Banks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which a bank's auditors would be prevented from acting as receivers of a bank's borrower.

Mr. Redwood: I have no such plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which all banks in their annual report would be required to disclose the number of administrators and receivers which have been appointed by them.

Mr. Redwood: I have no such plans.

Company Directors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which all increases in directors' pay and perks would be subject to a specific resolution at the annual general meeting.

Mr. Redwood: To subject directors' executive pay increases to a resolution of the company annual general meeting would be cumbersome and ineffective. At present the details of directors' service contracts over one year are, with some exceptions, required under the Companies Act 1985 to be made available for inspection by shareholders, who may ask questions or put forward resolutions at the annual general meeting. In addition, directors' service contracts for a period of five years or more are subject to approval by general meeting. This strikes a fair balance, in my view, between the need for the interests of the shareholder to be taken into account and flexibility in the recruitment of directors.

Ramor Investments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, further to his correspondence with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, he will make a full statement to the House on his decision not to publish the final report on Ramor Investments.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost of completing his Department's investigations into Ramor Investments.

Mr. Redwood: The total of the investigation into the affairs of Ramor Investments Limited was £760,301.

River Pollution

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any proposals for legislation under which all public limited companies will have to publish the level of their discharges and emissions into rivers and air.

Mr. Leigh: No. Under the Water Act 1989, monitoring data obtained from consented discharges are already entered on to public registers maintained by the National Rivers Authority. Similarly, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, monitoring data on processes authorised under the integrated pollution control and local authority air pollution control systems are entered on to public registers maintained by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and by local authorities.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the research of the Warren Spring laboratory into chemical separation procedures in the treatment of solid and liquid hazardous wastes.

Mr. Leigh: Warren Spring laboratory is investigating the extent to which a range of chemical separation procedures can be applied to the treatment of solid and liquid hazardous wastes. The procedures are being applied to detoxify dangerous mixtures, and to remove materials (especially metals) from wastes where it is economically feasible or environmentally desirable to do so.

Chemical separation procedures form part of Warren Spring's contaminated land research programme. The procedures can also have "cleaner" technology applications. Warren Spring has recently devised a new process for a private sector client for removing hazardous cadmium from phosphoric acid and the manufacture of fertilisers.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the research of the Warren Spring laboratory into the use of X-ray fluorescence for monitoring pyrometallurgical processes.

Mr. Leigh: The X-ray fluorescence (XRF) project was funded jointly by the Minerals Industry Research Organisation and the Department of Trade and Industry. The equipment research and development phase was successfully completed at Warren Spring laboratory in 1989, and the instrument has subsequently been patented.

The XRF instrument enables "real time" monitoring of high temperature and corrosive gas streams for elements above sulphur in atomic weight (ie most acid gas elements and all base and heavy metals). It has potential applications for controlling a wide range of thermal processes both inside and outside the metals industry, and for monitoring emissions for compliance with regulatory standards.

The XRF instrument is currently being applied at Warren Spring to research projects into the thermal treatment of a variety of wastes and to "demonstration" test work in the metals industry in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the research by the Warren Spring laboratory into the physical and bacterial techniques for separating pyritic coal, prior to combustion.

Mr. Leigh: Initial investigations at Warren Spring Laboratory into the removal of pyritic sulphur from coal prior to combustion were carried out in the mid-1980s under funding from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Energy, and Industry. Earlier this year funding was obtained from the European Coal and Steel Commission (ECSC) and the Department of Energy's energy technology support unit (ETSU) for further research into physical separation.

Bacterial removal of pyritic sulphur has been investigated at Warren Spring as part of a recently-completed European Community collaborative project, with additional funding from the Department of Trade and Industry. Promising initial results have resulted in a further EC project designed to test the process at pilot scale. ETSU is providing the additional funding to meet Warren Spring's costs. ETSU is also supporting parallel work at the Laboratory to assess the bacterial process for a range of different United Kingdom coals.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the major public sector projects in the Warren Spring laboratory's programme.

Mr. Leigh: Major public sector projects at Warren Spring laboratory for 1991-92 are as follows:

Department of the Environment

air pollution programme (principally monitoring, measurement and abatement);

waste management (principally technologies for waste recycling, waste treatment and contaminated land treatment);

technical and administrative support for the DOE part of the environment technology innovation support (ETIS) scheme.

Department of Trade and Industry

environmental programme (principally DTI Environment inquiry point and recycling advisory unit, airborne pollution measurement protocols for the national measurement system, safety and environmental aspects of bioprocessing and studies of waste segregation systems, volatile organic compound emissions and aircraft emissions);

non-environmental process technology programme (projects jointly funded by DTI and industry);

Department of Transport

The marine pollution programme covers monitoring and modelling oil and chemical spills at sea, techniques for handling spills at sea and on beaches, and incident response support.

A separate programme is looking at exhaust emissions from light duty vehicles.

Department of Energy

The programme includes projects on coal desulphurisation and refuse derived fuel.

Scottish Environment Department

The programme covers sampling of industrial emissions and other services to Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

Health and Safety Executive

The programme comprises projects on work place emissions of hazardous substances and heavy gas dispersion.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the work of the Warren Spring laboratory on the thermal processing of waste.

Mr. Leigh: Following research at Warren Spring laboratory into characterising waste fuels, supported mainly by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy's energy technology support unit (ETSU), projects are currently underway for ETSU and the private sector.

The focus of current research at Warren Spring is on the "cleaner" technology approach (controlling waste input characteristics and the thermal process to prevent pollutants from entering the waste stream) to complement the "end of pipe" approach (cleaning the flue gases). This work includes gasification methods to produce more flexible and higher value fuel from solid wastes (e.g. for use in gas turbines), with a view to increasing the conversion efficiency of waste fuels for power generation.

Warren Spring's work in this area includes separate contracts for ETSU, the Department of the Environment, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, local authorities and the private sector for monitoring the performance and emissions from both waste fuel and non-waste fuel combustion plants.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of research by the Warren Spring laboratory into mineral processing techniques which may be applicable to the treatment of contaminated land;

(2) if he will make a statement on the outcome of the research by the Warren Spring laboratory on the development of soil cleaning techniques and its application to contaminated land.

Mr. Leigh: Warren Spring laboratory currently has three main research programmes for investigating soil cleaning techniques and their applicability to contaminated land.

The largest programme is for the Department of the Environment. The emphasis of the experimental programme is to develop the concept of process integration, based on soil fractionation and using one waste to treat another in biological systems. The fractionation work focuses on the application of a range of mineral and waste processing technologies to produce contaminant concentrates for further treatment.

Under the United States Environmental Protection Agency's emerging technologies program, Warren Spring is investigating the application of several mineral processing techniques for removing contaminants from soil, with particular emphasis on flotation, flocculation and magnetic separation techniques.

Under the European Community's science and technology for environmental protection (STEP) programme, Warren Spring is investigating with partners from Germany, the Netherlands and Norway the biological removal of metals from solid wastes and contaminated soils.

All three programmes are scheduled to run from 1991 to 1993. A technical appraisal report under the DoE programme reviewing contaminated soil clean-up processes is due to be published early in 1992. The other two programmes have been agreed only recently but it is intended that the results should be published for take-up by industry.

In order to carry out these programmes it has been necessary for Warren Spring to adapt and upgrade a range of facilities at the laboratory, including the mineral processing pilot plant. As a result, Warren Spring is now able to offer an extensive range of experimental and treatment facilities for use by both the public and private sectors in the cleaning of contaminated land and the treatment of bulky hazardous wastes.

Auditors and Accountants

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many chartered accountants and auditors have now registered under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: At 15 November, some 24,000 individuals were registered with supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989 as being eligible for appointment as company auditors or responsible for company audit work on behalf of registered audit firms.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many countries are currently off cover for the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and what percentage of the world's population this represents.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Export Credits Guarantee Department currently offers some credit insurance cover for all but three countries. The population of these countries represents 0·587 per cent. of the global total (World Bank Atlas 1990).

Export Intelligence Service

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is making additional provision for information developed by Her Majesty's overseas posts about export opportunities to be made available to British industry in light of the insolvency of the Export intelligence service.

Mr. Sainsbury: Cable and Wireless plc have taken over from Export Opportunities Ltd. the contract to match and distribute business opportunities from the Export Intelligence database, and there has been no break in the service to subscribers. I understand that the liquidator of Trade Network International Ltd. is seeking a buyer for the Export Network business under which its customers can search information on-line including that in Export Intelligence. My Department's other contract with Financial Times Profile to provide on-line access is unaffected.

Life Insurance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to make consumers aware of the limitations of life insurance companies liability for their tied intermediaries.

Mr. Redwood: These are matters for the Securities and Investments Board (SIB) and the other regulatory authorities under the Financial Services Act. LAUTRO (Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation) has recently introduced new rules in this area. Also, the SIB are currently undertaking a major review of the regulation of the retail investment sector.

Investors' Compensation Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has asked the investors' compensation scheme to pay interest on compensation payments paid more than 12 months away from the date of compensation assessment.

Mr. Redwood: The rules of the investors compensation scheme are a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Money Advice Services

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plan to increase the money allocated through his Department to money advice services.

Mr. Leigh: My Department does not provide funds specifically for money advice services and has no plans to do so. The main provider of money advice nationally is the citizens' advice service which through the network of citizens' advice bureaux advises on debt problems as part of its general advisory work. Individual bureaux are funded mainly by local authorities. My Department funds the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and Citizens Advice Scotland which provide the support services to the local bureaux. Total DTI grant-in-aid in 1991-92 to NACAB and CAS will be about £12 million.

Many lending institutions have already provided funds to support money advice services: the Government would like to see more following that lead.

Investment Services Directive

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on progress in negotiations on the proposed investment services directive at the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers which met on 11 November.

Mr. Redwood: The Council of Economic and Finance Ministers (ECOFIN) which met on 11 November did not discuss the Investment Services Directive. The Netherlands are currently considering whether to hold further meetings on the outstanding issues of principle during their presidency but they have not said when the directive will next be discussed in ECOFIN.

VAT

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken by the Government to ensure that Greece complies with the judgment of the European Court of Justice concerning discriminatory VAT rates within the alcoholic beverage sector.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* It is for the European Commission to ensure that Greece complies with European Court of Justice judgments.

I have, however, asked my single market compliance unit to liaise with Customs and Excise and our embassy in Athens and monitor compliance by Greece so that, should there be any evidence of non-compliance, the United Kingdom will bring this to the notice of the European Commission.

Retail Regulation

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the Securities and Investments Board's review of retail regulation.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* The review is a matter for the SIB in the first instance. I have received a number of representations which have been passed to the board.

Financial Institutions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans he has to prevent financial institutions offering both an independent advice service on financial products and a tied advice service;

(2) what plans he has to disbar the banks and other financial institutions from operating dual status with regard to advice on financial services.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* This is a matter for SIB and the other regulatory bodies under the Financial Services Act.

Textile Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that the east midlands is included in the EC's Retex scheme for financial assistance to areas where the textile industry has been in decline.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 November 1991]:* The Commission has made a preliminary announcement about this proposed scheme but details have yet to be made available to member states including the criteria for selecting eligible areas and the likely allocation of funds to the United Kingdom. The Government will naturally seek to ensure the maximum effective coverage within the United Kingdom.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which all public limited companies would be required to reveal the number of employees who earn less than 50 per cent. of the median male wage.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.
No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will propose legislation under which companies would be required to give details of the number of employees earning less than 50 per cent. of the male median salary in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will propose legislation under which companies would be required to publish the number of employees earning wages less that £193 per week.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.
No.

DEFENCE

Diving Forces

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bases of the Royal Naval Reserve port diving branch, giving numbers of officers, qualified divers, trainees and other personnel at each base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The present strength of Royal Naval Reserve bases with port divers is:

	Officers	*Ratings*
HMS Calliope	77 (1)	202 (16)
HMS Calpe	23(0)	67 (7)
HMS Camperdown	102 (0)	129 (9)
HMS Claverhouse	98 (1)	188 (16)
HMS Eaglet	136 (2)	299 (25)
HMS Flying Fox	138 (0)	213 (18)
HMS Graham	95 (2)	213 (16)
HMS President	234 (0)	234 (17)
HMS Sussex	90 (1)	150 (18)
HMS Wessex	170 (2)	209 (11)

The figures in brackets are those officers and ratings who are Royal Naval Reserve port divers; each unit has two or three trainees at any time.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the police forces and other public services which have received assistance from Royal Naval Reserve port divers during the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the distinction between the training, role and costs of the different diving branches of the Royal Naval Reserve.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the plans for the future of the Royal Naval Reserve port diving branch, and on the implications of those plans for Royal Navy regular diving units.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that he received from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 21 October at column *446*. There are no implications for the Royal Navy regular diving units.

Housing (ex-service Personnel)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with *(a)* Colchester borough council and *(b)* Westminster city council regarding their housing allocations policy and its effect on ex-service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

RAF Germany

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned percentage increase in the capability of RAF Germany over the next four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Norwegian and Danish counterparts regarding the deployment of British units of the Rapid Reaction Corps on operational tours of duty in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Garvie Island

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what exercises have been carried out on Garvie island in the last month; and how many times in the last two years exercises have been carried out on Garvie island at the weekend.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Garvie island range has been in use on 11 occasions over the last month and on two Saturdays during the past two years. Specific details are as follows:

Date	*Activity*
Use of Garvie island over the last month	
8 October	Aircraft bombing exercise
29 October	Aircraft bombing exercise

Date	Activity
30 October	Aircraft bombing exercise
5 November	Aircraft bombing exercise
8 November	Aircraft bombing exercise
14 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
15 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
16 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
18 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
19 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
20 November	Offshore naval gunfire exercise
Use of Garvie island at weekends over past two years	
2 February 1991	Aircraft bombing exercise
28 September 1991	Aircraft bombing exercise

United States Air Force

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what exercises the United States Air Force have conducted in the United Kingdom in the last month.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Between 19 October and 19 November the United States Air Force has conducted one exercise in the United Kingdom. This took place between 28 and 31 October and involved aircraft from RAF Bentwaters carrying out a rehearsal for the NATO tactical evaluation of the base.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States Air Force has been involved in training in the United Kingdom for operations against Libya in the last month.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United States Air Force aircraft carry out training in the United Kingdom on a regular basis. It is not our practice to comment on specific operational matters.

Defence Estate

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total maintenance backlog of *(a)* unavoidable and essential repairs and *(b)* urgent repairs on the Defence estate as of 1 April in each year since 1970.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Service Housing Task Force

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish the recommendations of the task force on service housing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 5 November at column 96.

Married Quarters

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of the housing associations with which he is discussing making available service married quarters; and when he expects these discussions to be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would be inappropriate to list the names of the housing associations while discussions are continuing. Announcements will be made when the discussions are complete.

1st Armoured Division

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which individual weapon systems will be used to measure the increase in capability of 1st Armoured Division.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The assessment is based on all weapon systems held by combat troops within the formation's order of battle.

Housing (Army Personnel)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 5,000 Army personnel who have applied for voluntary redundancy have already made their own provision for housing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the private housing arrangements or plans of those Army personnel who have applied to be considered for redundancy is not held by the Ministry of Defence. We anticipate that many individuals will be using their special capital payments to help to purchase a home for the first time.

3rd (UK) Division

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned percentage increase in the capability of 3rd (UK) Division over the next four years.

Mr. Hamilton: As outlined in "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm. 1595), 3rd (UK) Division will be a new formation comprising two mechanised brigades and 5th Airborne Brigade. There is therefore no basis for a comparison with any of the existing four divisions of BAOR.

Service Personnel (Deaths)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column 425, if full reports of boards of inquiries are made available to bereaved families on request after the deaths of service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Next of kin are, however, provided—on request—with an accurate and objective summary of the report of the service inquiry.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 19 November, *Official Report*, column 425, about deaths of service personnel, in what form the information requested is available; and if he will publish it in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not always the case that families request details of the deaths of service personnel, but in all cases in which they do, details, in the form of a specially prepared statement, are given. Records of all cases are not held centrally.

Admiral Sir Julian Oswald

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, what changes in practice have taken place since 29 October to prevent the information made available by Admiral Sir Julian Oswald in *The Times* being subsequently made available to hon. Members in parliamentary answers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answers that I gave the hon. Member on 14 November at columns *667-68* and 19 November at column *150*.

Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been *(a)* total defence expenditure, *(b)* expenditure on weaponry and *(c)* expenditure on nuclear weapons and nuclear powered weapons for the years 1979 to 1991 in real and constant prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures detailing total defence expenditure for the period requested are published in the Eleventh report of the House of Commons Defence Committee on the Statement on the Defence Estimates. Expenditure on equipment and the nuclear strategic force can be found at tables 2.2 and 2.3 in volume 2 of the annual Statements on the Defence Estimates. It has been the policy of successive Governments not separately to identify expenditure on nuclear weapons.

Army Board

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the officers comprising the Army Board by rank, name, previous regiment or corps and present job.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Four members of the Army Board are serving officers:

General Sir John Chapple, late 2nd Gurkha Rifles,
Chief of the General Staff

General Sir David Ramsbotham, late Royal Green Jackets,
Adjutant General

General Sir Edward Jones, late Royal Green Jackets,
Quartermaster General

Lieutenant General A. S. J. Blacker, late Royal Tank Regiment,
Master General of the Ordnance.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 November 1991

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Parliamentary Duties

32. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much time he has spent on parliamentary duties since he last answered oral questions.

Mr. Chris Patten: The parliamentary aspect of my official duties consists almost entirely of answering oral questions at the Dispatch Box. I have, however, answered six written questions since I last answered oral questions.

EC Issues

33. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to European Community issues in his capacity as Chancellor of the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Duchy has several historical links with Europe. For example our coat of arms incorporates the fleurs de lys, sanctioned by Edmund Crouchback on his marriage to the Queen of Nevarre. Today, however, there are no strong links—most have lapsed with the passing of time.

Official Duties

34. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next proposes to visit the Duchy on official business.

35. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to pay an official visit to the Duchy.

36. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he plans to next visit the Duchy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) earlier today.

Interest Rates

37. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the effect of falling interest rates on small and medium-sized businesses in the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am sure that the fall in interest rates will be of enormous benefit to all businesses in the Duchy.

Taxation

38. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the impact of taxation on tenants of the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: Like everyone else, Duchy tenants have gained tremendous benefits from the reductions in personal taxation brought about by successive Conservative Governments.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Home Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will take steps to ensure that where repossession proceedings are taken in the county court, information on debt counselling and housing advice services will be sent out with the summons.

The Attorney-General: The Government are keen to ensure that defendants in county court possession proceedings are informed that counselling and advice is available to them.

Consultations are taking place with the major advice agencies in order to identify a method of compiling a list of advice agencies that may accompany every county court possession summons.

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of cases brought to court by the Serious Fraud Office have resulted in a successful conviction.

The Attorney-General: In the current year from 6 April 1991 there have been 14 concluded trials. Twenty-three defendants have been convicted and six acquitted—a conviction rate of nearly 80 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases the Serious Fraud Office has brought to the courts in each year since its creation.

The Attorney-General: The figures are as follows:—

	Number
April 1988—April 1989	9
April 1989—April 1990	17
April 1990—April 1991	27
April 1991—to date	14

The numbers are based on cases that have been concluded in the court of trial during the relevant period. If currently unconcluded cases are added, the last figure becomes 19.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Performance-related Pay

39. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commissioners have considered replacing the minimum stipend by performance-related pay.

Mr. Alison: Stipends have traditionally been regarded as remuneration which enables clergy to pursue their ministry and support themselves and their families, rather than rewards or salaries for a job of work. In this sense, stipends are not competitive remuneration for which performance-related pay might be an appropriate mechanism.

The stipend levels of individual clergy are set by their dioceses within recommendations of the Commissioners, as central stipends authority.

WALES

Wages Statistics

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employees in Wales are paid less than £3·40 an hour; and how many of these employees are *(a)* women, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* in manual occupations.

Mr. David Hunt: It is estimated that 185,000 employees in employment on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence earned less than £3·40 per hour in April 1991; 147,000 were women, of whom 103,000 worked part-time. 102,000 persons were employed in manual occupations. Data for part-time male employees are not available.

Sources: April 1991 New Earnings Survey and Quarterly Estimate Series of Employment, March 1991; Employment Department.

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the Welsh Development Agency Bill.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Nebulisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidance he has given to the Welsh health authorities concerning the supply of nebulisers free of charge and on long-term loan to those requiring them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The NHS Act 1977 clearly sets out the responsibilities of district health authorities. Section 1 of the NHS Act 1977 requires that NHS services provided under the Act to NHS patients must be free of charge, except where the making and recovery of charges is expressly provided for by legislation. Later legislation, including the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, does not alter this position, nor does it enable partial charges to be made to health service patients. Health authorities are fully aware of the position which has recently been confirmed to them.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to effect refunds for those who have proof of payment for nebulisers prescribed by national health service consultants to national health service patients.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our officials have asked Welsh district health authorities to examine their existing policies and practices for the provision of equipment, including nebulisers. In addition, authorities have been asked to investigate and report on individual cases involving nebulisers that have been notified and to consider appropriate action.

Pollution

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the levels of pollution from each incinerator operating in Wales; and to what extent they comply with EC legislation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on levels of pollution from individual incinerators is not held centrally. Current emission limits and controls for waste incineration processes under 1 tonne per hour are set out in process guidance notes PG1-25/5(91) issued by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales and published by HMSO. Operators of incineration processes over 1 tonne per hour are subject to individual authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Emission limits and other control standards are included in the specific authorisation documents. The only incinerators covered by EC legislation at the moment are municipal waste incinerators—and there are none of these in Wales.

Orimulsion

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what applications have been received by the Welsh Office to test-burn the imported fuel Orimulsion in Wales or to burn that fuel on a commercial basis.

Mr. David Hunt: No applications, in either category, have been received by the Welsh Office. The Secretary of State for Energy is currently considering an application from National Power to extend Pembroke power station to enable it to burn orimulsion. The company is also applying to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for authorisation to burn this fuel at Pembroke.

Health Service Statistics

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will obtain statistics showing the number of midwives, district nurses and health visitors practising within Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As I indicated in my reply on 18 November, at column 34, to the hon. Gentleman's question on the number of midwives, district nurses and health visitors on 18 November, complete information on staff numbers is not available at present for occupational groups such as these. The Department is working with district health authorities to improve the information on the manpower information system from which detailed breakdowns of nursing and midwifery manpower are derived, and progress is being made. Once we are satisfied that the system is a fully reliable source of occupationally disaggregated information, such as numbers of midwives, district nurses and health visitors, such information will be made available.

Harbours

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the lengths of long-distance routes approved under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which pass through harbours regulated under the Harbours Act 1964.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is likely that parts of the Pembrokeshire coast path, which runs for 269 km between Amroth and Cardigan, pass through harbours regulated under the Harbours Act 1964. However, detailed information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the amount of money owed in the poll tax in Wales in the last financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 17 October 1991, at columns 206-7. No further information is available.

Offloading Facilities

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what applications have been received by the Welsh Office to refurbish or extend existing facilities or to construct new facilities, for offloading from seagoing vessels *(a)* bulk oil, *(b)* natural gas, *(c)* liquified gas or *(d)* coal.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has under consideration no applications from harbour authorities in Wales seeking statutory authorisation by means of a harbour order under the Harbour Act 1964 to carry out such works which they do not otherwise have statutory powers to carry out under their local legislation.

ENERGY

Coal Reserves

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to include estimates of United Kingdom coal reserves in the departmental Brown Book; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, British Coal is charged with the development of the coal-mining industry and it publishes estimates of total United Kingdom coal reserves in its annual report. My Department does not keep separate figures.

Onshore Petroleum Licensing

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about further onshore petroleum licensing.

Mr. Moynihan: I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses the text of a notice, which will be published as soon as possible in the *Official Gazette*, inviting companies to apply for exploration licences in respect of unlicensed areas in Great Britain and certain near shore waters. The notice specifies that applications should be made on Wednesday 19 February, 1992. Application forms and guidance notes will be available from my Department.

I shall separately be inviting holders of production licences to apply to transfer exploration acreage within their existing licences to the new style exploration licences, subject to agreement being reached on a satisfactory work programme for the area.

Successful applicants will be offered exploration licences containing the conditions set out in the Petroleum (Production) (Landward Areas) Regulations 1991. The licences will grant rights for a term of six years and entitle the licensee to carry out seismic surveys and deep drilling subject to the need to obtain the requisite permission from the appropriate mineral planning authorities and land owners and occupiers.

Electricity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his calculation of United Kingdom electricity consumption in each of the next five years; and if he will give his estimate of the generating capacities that will be available from *(a)* oil, *(b)* gas, *(c)* nuclear, *(d)* coal and *(e)* renewable sources.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department does not routinely forecast electricity consumption. That, and decisions on capacity and fuel choice, are the job of the electricity industry, taking into account the commercial and regulatory environment. When specific needs arise, projections are produced, as, for example, in the UK's submission to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was published as energy paper 58 and is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects nuclear fusion to be commercially viable for the generation of electricity.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Nuclear fusion is unlikely to be available as an energy source before 2050 at the earliest. Even if fusion were technically available at that date, its economic prospects are uncertain.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Records

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many national indexes are held by the police or his Department, other than those relating to drugs and football hooliganism.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Department holds the following national indexes (including all national police indexes):

Prison service

Inmate information system (a national register of prison inmates)[1]

Category A prisoners[1]

Life sentence prisoner index[1]

Immigration service

Suspect index (contains details of people whom it is considered essential to identify at the ports because, for example, they have been deported or are involved in criminal activity, or because they have an adverse immigration history)

Port precautions index (used in embarkation control to assist in prevention of children being removed in contravention of a court order or against the wishes of one parent)

Intelligence unit index (contains details of people known or suspected of abuses of the immigration laws and details of suspect documents. It also includes details of people refused leave to enter or refused entry clearance)

Police department

Criminal names index (index to the criminal records)

Index to the national fingerprint collection

Wanted/missing persons index

Disqualified drivers index

Vehicle owners index

Vehicles reports index (stolen, suspect vehicles)

Stolen property index (mainly plant, vehicles)

Obscene publications squad index (persons convicted of offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, the Protection of Children Act 1978, the Criminal Justice Act

1988, the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and the Customs Consolidation Act 1876. The index also includes information regarding persons suspected of being associated with child pornography. The index is held by the Metropolitan police)

Animal rights national index (collates and disseminates information on animal rights extremism)

Statistical department

Offenders index[1] (record of offenders convicted of standard list offences recorded since 1963)

Homicide index (a record of each case of reported homicide)

Probation index[1] (persons subject to supervision by the probation service—including those subject to community service orders)

Mentally disordered offenders index[1] (a record of persons in psychiatric hospitals who are subject to hospital orders with restrictions on discharge or who have been transferred from prison service establishments)

United Kingdom Passport agency

United Kingdom passports index (record of all passports issued by the United Kingdom passport offices and by Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts overseas)

Warning list (to ensure that certain passport applications receive particular attention)

Others

Voluntary organisations (those in receipt of Government funding)

Index of exempted dogs (owners of pit bull terriers and other specified breeds which have their dogs exempted from the controls of the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991)).

[1] Applies only to England and Wales.

Police (Racial Abuse)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the amount of money paid by way of compensation to ethnic origin members serving with the Metropolitan police force as a result of claims for racial abuse and harassment from fellow police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the beginning of 1990, £21,000 has been paid as compensation to ethnic minority officers in the Metropolitan police as a result of claims for racial abuse and harassment in respect of two cases.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussion he has had with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the allegations of racial abuse followed up by officers in the Metropolitan police force following the case of police constable Franklyn Asumah; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the commissioner that these matters are being investigated by the complaints unit.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number of Metropolitan officers dismissed from the service in each of the last five years, for racial abuse to fellow officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been no Metropolitan police officers dismissed from the service in the last five years for racial abuse to fellow officers.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes now operate in the East Staffordshire district in the Burton constituency.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. I understand from the Staffordshire police that, in the Burton police subdivision, which includes East Staffordshire district, there were 73 neighbourhood watch schemes at the end of September 1991, covering nearly 17,000 households.

Police (Ethnic Origin)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of ethnic origin police officers *(a)* men and *(b)* women serving in each of the Metropolitan police divisions; and what ranks these officers hold.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Ethnic minority officers in the Metropolitan Police by area, broken down into rank and gender

Areas	*Superintendent (all men)*	*Chief Inspector (all men)*	*Inspector (all men)*	*Sergeant*		*Police Constable*	
				Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
1	—	—	1	3	—	46	13
2	—	—	2	5	2	50	20
3	—	—	—	2	—	40	13
4	—	1	1	2	—	53	17
5	—	—	—	2	—	14	4
6	—	1	1	4	1	54	11
7	1	—	1	5	—	43	14
8	—	—	2	3	—	44	14
Headquarters	1	—	—	10	—	14	8
Police training centre	—	—	—	—	—	21	7

Broadcasting

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to exercise his powers under section 8(4) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 to amend rule 21 of the current code of advertising standards in order to fulfil the requirements of the European broadcasting directive—89/552/EEC—and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to amend the ITC code of advertising standards and practice. Rule 21 states that no advertisement may encourage behaviour prejudicial to the protection of the environment, in accordance with article 12(e) of the directive, and goes on to give guidance as to how this should be interpreted in practice.

Prison Statistics

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how expenditure in real terms on prisons has moved since 1980.

Mrs. Rumbold: Expenditure on prisons has increased from £744 million in 1980-81 in 1990-91 prices to £1,342 million in 1990-91, an increase of 80 per cent.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners, who should have been held in prisons, were held in police cells in each week to date in 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of prisoners held in police cells in each week to date in 1991 are as follows:

1991	*Number*
4 January	504
11 January	557
18 January	570
25 January	567
1 February	604
8 February	616
15 February	639
22 February	672
1 March	673
8 March	639
15 March	762
22 March	641
26 March	728
5 April	633
12 April	503
19 April	545
26 April	487
3 May	516
10 May	603
17 May	661
24 May	600
31 May	593
7 June	598
14 June	609
21 June	699
28 June	872
5 July	1,049
12 July	1,080
19 July	1,194
26 July	1,190
2 August	1,165
9 August	1,183
16 August	1,301
23 August	1,557
30 August	1,534
6 September	1,584
13 September	1,647
20 September	1,803
27 September	1,665
4 October	1,624
11 October	1,661
18 October	1,802
25 October	1,807
1 November	1,777
8 November	1,718
15 November	1,640
22 November	1,638

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the ratios of *(a)* prison officers, *(b)* governor grades and *(c)* Prison Department civil servants to prisoners on 1 January and 1 July in each year since 1980.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is as follows:

	Officer inmate ratio	*Establishments Governor grades inmate ratio*	*Other staff inmate ratio*	*Headquarters Total staff inmate ratio*
1 April 1980	·32	·02	·16	—
1 April 1981	·35	·02	·17	—
1 April 1982	·35	·02	·17	—
1 April 1983	·35	·02	·17	·04
1 April 1984	·36	·02	·17	·05
1 April 1985	·36	·02	·17	·04
1 April 1986	·36	·02	·17	·04
1 April 1987	·35	·02	·16	·04
1 April 1988	·37	·02	·16	·04
1 April 1989	·40	·02	·17	·04
1 April 1990	·44	·02	·19	·04
1 April 1991	·48	·02	·21	·05

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours were worked on average per inmate by *(a)* prison officers, *(b)* governor grades and *(c)* Prison Department civil servants in each year since 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: Governors are an all hours worked grade and information about the actual number of hours worked by them during any particular period is not collected centrally. Similarly, no such information is available for the wide range of grades of staff who work in prison service headquarters. The average prison officer hours worked per inmate is as follows:

Prison officer hours worked on average per inmate: 1 April 1985 to 1991

	Hours
1 April 1985	20·35
1 April 1986	20·34
1 April 1987	19·76
1 April 1988	17·30
1 April 1989	18·08
1 April 1990	18·69
1 April 1991	19·72

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many industrial disputes there are at present in the prison service.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 22 November there were registered disputes at 36 of Her Majesty's prisons. Some of these disputes cover more than one issue.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current estimate of *(a)* prisoner numbers and *(b)* the total certified normal accommodation in the prison estate for each year to 1997.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the basis of projections made at the beginning of this year, the projected population and certified normal accommodation (CNA) for prison service establishments in England and Wales in each financial year to 1996-97 were as follows:

	Population	*CNA*
1992-93	45,669	49,114
1993-94	45,836	50,862
1994-95	46,932	51,676
1995-96	48,587	51,850
1996-97	50,262	51,727

The actual prison population is already 1,500 in excess of the figure projected for 1992-93. Until the end of 1994 there will also be temporary reductions in the capacities of those establishments where access is being provided to night sanitation.

Prison population projections in calendar year form are published in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin, "Projections of long-term trends in the prison population to 1999" issue 10/91, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the monetary value of the food allowance for prisoners has been in real terms in each year since 1980.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated average cost, per prisoner per week (at September 1991 prices), of the normal dietary scales for the 12 months ending in September, 1983-91 was:

Year[1]	*Current value*[2 3] £
1983	7·22
1984	7·75
1985	7·61
1986	7·25
1987	7·17
1988	7·06
1989	6·91
1990	[4]7·00
1991	[4]6·59

Notes:

[1]Information for the years prior to 1983 is not available.

[2]At September 1991 prices. Values adjusted using the retail prices index for all food items.

[3]The values include the estimated notional value at published farm gate prices of goods produced on prison farms and gardens.

[4]From January 1990, salad items, culinary adjuncts, special provision for prisoners attending court and for medical diets and supplements for dispersal prisons and for Christmas extras have been excluded from the costings. Figures strictly comparable with those for earlier years are not available.

Improved purchasing has led to steadily reduced costs since 1985 for a basically unchanged dietary scale.

Young Offenders

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders were transferred from Hewell Grange to the young offender institution at Prescoed (Usk) during September 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: Ten.

Immigration

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations are taking place into the circumstances in which the United States citizen Mr. Fred Leuchter entered the United Kingdom after being barred from entry on the ground that his presence could not be conducive to the public good, and into the role of Mr. David Irving in procuring his entry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Investigations have shown that Mr. Leuchter was admitted entirely inadvertently. Steps have been taken to avoid a recurrence. He was returned overseas on 16 November.

Dangerous Dogs

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take in respect of those pit bull terrier owners who have been unable to arrange for their dogs to be tattooed by 30 November, in compliance with the requirements of the exemption scheme set up under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: One of the requirements of the exemption scheme set up under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 was that the owners of dogs covered by section 1 should have them permanently marked.

We are aware that there are a number of owners of such dogs, including pit bull terriers, who have been unable to arrange for their dogs to be tattooed by 30 November. It is wrong that those owners who in other respects have taken positive steps to abide by the requirements of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 should not have the opportunity to obtain a certificate of exemption.

My right hon. Friend has therefore laid the Dangerous Dogs Act Compensation and Exemption Schemes (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 1991 which comes into force today, which gives owners of exempted specially controlled dogs until 1 March 1992 to arrange for their dogs to be tattooed in the approved manner. Certificates of exemption will be issued to owners who have not been able to arrange for their dog to be tattooed with a requirement that the dog is tattooed before 1 March 1992, provided that they have complied with the other requirements of the exemption scheme. If an owner has not provided the index of exempted dogs with satisfactory evidence by 1 March 1992 to show that his dog has been tattooed, the certificate will lapse, the owner will be liable to prosecution and the dog may be seized and destroyed.

The new order does not change the position for owners who did not notify the police by 12 October of their wish to have their dogs exempted from the provisions of section 1(3) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or who have not met other conditions of the certificate of exemption. Those who are in possession of dogs to which section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 applies who have not complied with the requirements of the law by having their dogs exempted will after 30 November be liable to prosecution.

ENVIRONMENT

SSAs

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his standard spending assessments for local authorities.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

Utting Report

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take action to increase to above the national average the standard spending assessment formula for Staffordshire county council to take account of the problems highlighted by pindown and the Utting report.

Mr. Key: The standard spending assessment measures the appropriate cost of providing a standard level of service. It is calculated by means of a formula based on each local authority's demographic, social and geographic characteristics. The personal social services element of the formula is applied in the same way to all social services authorities. It would not be appropriate to apply a different approach to the assessment for any individual authority.

Homelessness

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has taken any census of the homeless in Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has not undertaken a census of homeless people in Leeds. Responsibility for dealing with households accepted as homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985 rests with local authorities; I understand that Leeds city council accepted 427 households as homeless in the quarter ending June 1991.

A count of rough sleepers was made as part of the census on the night of 21-22 April 1991; 21 people were counted in Leeds. A copy of the "1991 Census: Supplementary Monitor of People Sleeping Rough", published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on 9 July 1991, has been placed in the Library.

Beaches

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments his Department has undertaken of progress achieved towards meeting the EC directives on cleaning up beaches by 1992.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 12 November at columns *465-66*.

Housing Organisations

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to create a legal and financial framework appropriate to consumer owned and controlled housing organisations.

Mr. Yeo: A suitable framework is already in place for the promotion and support of ownership co-operatives. Grants are available from the Housing Corporation to assist their development and capital support is provided to registered co-operatives through the Housing Corporation's approved development programme. The Corporation is currently developing a comprehensive new strategy for tenant participation in the housing association sector to include both ownership and management options. Tenant management initiatives in local authority housing are promoted by the Department through an enhanced grant programme.

Environmental Protection Act

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many commencement orders have been issued to date, pursuant to the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and for what sections of the Act they have been applicable.

Mr. Baldry: Nine. They are as follows:

Sections 128 to 139 (save for the amendments made by ss, 128, 130 and 132), 89(7) to (9) and (11) to (13), 105 (partially), 3, 1, 2, 4 to 28, 100 to 104, 105 (partially), 159 and 162(2) (partially), 86(2), (6) to (8), (11), (14) and (15); 88(5), (7) and (9)(b), 89(4), 90(1), (2) and (7), 94(1) and (2) and 96(2) and (3) and 162(1) (partially), sections 86(1), (4), (5), (9) and (13); 87(1), (2) (3)(a) to (e) and (4) to (6), 88(1) to (4), (6), (8), (9)(a) and (c) to (e) and (10); 98(1), (2) (5) and (6) (England and Wales only).

The amendments made by sections 128, 130, and 132, 162(2) (partially), 86(3) and (10), 87(7), 89(1)(a) to (f), (2), (3), (5), (6), (10) and (14), 91(1)(a) to (f), (2) to (13), 92(1)(a) to (c), (2) to (10), 93, 94(3) to (9), 95, 96(1), 98(3) and (4), 106(4) and (5), 107(8), 108(1)(b), (3)(b), (5), (7) and (9), 111(1), (2), (4), (5), (7) and (11), 113, 114(1) to (3), 115(4), 122(1) (partially) and (4), 123(7) and (9), 124 to 126, 156, 158, 162(1) and (2) (partially);

Sections 86(1), (4) (5) and (13), 87(1), (2), (3)(a) to (e) and (4) to (6), 88(1) to (4), (6), (8) (9)(a), (c) and (d) and (10) and 98(1), (5) and (6) (Scotland only).

Sections 29 to 32, 50, 51, 60 (partially), 68, 71, 72, 75, 77, 147, 162(1) and (2) (partially), 86(12), 87(3)(f), 89(1)(g), 90(3) to (6), 91(1)(g) and 92(1)(d), 152 and 49.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether council employees working in Liverpool's direct labour organisation will be allowed to submit competitive tenders for forthcoming HATS projects.

Mr. Key: No. Under section 1 of the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 local authorities may only enter into agreements with designated public bodies to supply goods, professional services and maintainance work of a minor nature. Although section 89 of the Housing Act 1988 does designate HATS as public bodies for the purposes of the 1970 Act, Liverpool's direct labour organisation would not be able to submit tenders for the major works contracts to be conducted under the HATS projects.

Harbours Act 1964

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the lengths of long distance routes approved under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which pass through harbours regulated under the Harbours Act 1964.

Mr. Baldry: The majority of long distance paths start or follow significant lengths of the English coast. Some will pass through harbours regulated under the Harbours Act 1964. However, precise information in the form requested is not held centrally and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Air Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of actual applications by local authorities for authorisations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 Air Pollution Regulations; and what estimate his Department has made of the number of applications which should have been made to date.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has not yet received all the quarterly returns for July, August and September from local authorities enforcing part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The figures for the first quarter (April, May and June) were 18 applications for new processes and 70 applications for existing processes. My Department estimated that the first block of processes due to apply for authorisation in the six months ending 30 September would comprise 4,600 to 4,800 processes as well as between 2,000 and 15,000 waste oil burners. It was only to be expected that the great bulk of applications would be received towards the end of this period.

Council House Sales

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of funds generated from capital receipts obtained through the sale of council houses; and whether he will now allow local authorities to use these receipts for reinvestment in new construction projects.

Mr. Yeo: The capital value (net of discount) of sales of dwellings by local authorities in England between April 1979 and June 1991 amounted to nearly £18 billion.

Since 1 April 1990 local authorities have been free to use 25 per cent. of the receipts from the sale of council dwellings for new capital investment. However, our general policy is to encourage the private sector, including housing associations, rather than local authorities to be the provider of new subsidised housing.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to allocate resources in 1992-93 for waste disposal from within the local authority other services block.

Mr. Heseltine: I have decided that more investment in waste disposal facilities is needed so as to improve environmental standards. However, this cannot be achieved because local authority investment is necessarily restricted by public expenditure considerations. I have therefore decided that in future, investment in new facilities or major improvements in existing facilities will be drawn from the private sector unless there are overwhelming arguments to the contrary. To bring into effect these arrangements, I have decided that all capital expenditure resources for waste disposal within the other services block should be allocated by way of supplementary credit approvals (SCAs). These are divided between four main programmes as follows:

	1992-93 £ million
Landfill gas/contaminated land	25
Recycling	15
Incinerators	10
Waste disposal (main progamme)	50
TOTAL	100

Furthermore, I have decided that in line with the Government's policy of increasing the role of the private sector in the disposal of municipal waste, main programme waste disposal schemes, and incinerators, will be considered for supplementary credit approvals only if they fall within the following categories:

(a) expenditure which is contractually committed on 25 November 1991;

(b) works necessary to make good and maintain sites and facilities which will not be transferred to the private sector;

(c) essential works necessary to keep sites and facilities operational until they can be transferred to the private sector, or until alternative private sector sites and facilities can be provided;

(d) investment in existing sites and facilities for which the authority have been unable to attract private sector investment, or secure satisfactory alternative provision from the private sector;

(e) expenditure related to authorities' regulatory functions.

These criteria do not affect the requirement under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for authorities to devolve operational control to a Local Authority Waste Disposal Company (LAWDC), joint venture, or private company.

My Department will be writing to waste disposal authorities to let them know the detailed arrangements under which these SCAs will be allocated.

The scope of the current programme of SCAs for landfill gas has been extended to include work on land contaminated by other pollutants.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to consult local government about the guidance he proposes to issue to the Local Government Commission to be set up under the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Portillo: I have issued to the local authority associations and other organisations with an interest, a paper on the guidance we propose to issue to the new Local Government Commission. Copies have been placed in the Library and additional copies are available in the Vote Office.

Faslane Incident

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will conduct an investigation into the incident at Faslane in which a constituent of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde was attacked by an unknown assailant during the course of his work as a security guard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that the incident in question relates to an altercation between two security guards employed by a private firm working at a contractor's site at the Royal Navy armaments depot, Coulport. The matter has been investigated by the MOD police and I am satisfied that no breach of security has occurred.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the average United Kingdom rate of economic growth since 1973 with comparable data for the previous decade, together with figures for manufacturing output, manufacturing employment and unemployment, and the levels of the real exchange rate in terms of relative export prices.

Mr. Mellor: Most of the information can be derived from data available on the Central Statistical Office's database as series CAOP—gross domestic product at constant factor cost; DVIS—index of the output of manufacturing industries; DYAW—employees in manufacturing industries; BCJD—United Kingdom unemployment total, seasonally adjusted; and BQHM—relative export unit value index.

Data in respect of manufacturing employment and unemployment are available from this source only from 1971. Data for earlier years are available in "British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract 1886-1968" and in "British Labour Statistics Year Books" for 1969 and 1970.

Copies of these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimates he has of the increased yield in VAT in 1992-93 as a result of the change he announced on 21 October for the payment of VAT by larger businesses from a quarterly payment system to a monthly system;

(2) what estimates he has of the reduction in yield from VAT in 1992-93 as a result of the change he announced on 21 October 1991 in the collection of VAT on imported goods to the system of postponed accounting.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Moving the larger VAT payers from quartely to monthly reporting in the autumn of 1992 will create an estimated once-off cash flow gain to the Exchequer in 1992-93 of about £1½ billion, although the precise effect is difficult to predict since it will depend on larger payers' tax liabilities in 1992-93.

Requiring traders to account for VAT on EC imports on their normal domestic VAT return from 1 January 1993, instead of monthly at importation as at present, will subsequently produce a once-off cash flow loss to the Exchequer in 1992-93 of about £1½ billion. Again, the precise effect is uncertain as it will depend on the pattern and terms of trade in 1992-93.

Had the Government introduced postponed accounting for EC imports in isolation the cash flow loss to the Exchequer in 1992-93 would have been about £2 billion. The cost would be more because all the VAT on imports would be paid quarterly, but the effect of introducing monthly returns first is that some VAT on imports—that of the largest payers—is paid monthly, rather than quarterly, under postponed accounting.

Credit

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the volume of outstanding credit granted by Finance Houses Association members to consumers in 1989 and 1990;

(2) what percentage of non-mortgage outstanding credit was accounted for by credit cards in 1989 and 1990; and what are the estimated percentage figures for the current year.

Mr. Maples: Information about credit advanced by members of the Finance Houses Association is not available from official statistics, but I understand the figures are published in the Finance Houses Association annual report 1991, a copy of which is in the Library.

The percentages of non-mortgage outstanding credit to consumers accounted for by bank credit cards were 14·4 and 16·6 at the end of 1989 and 1990 respectively. The latest available figures show that at the end of the third quarter of 1991 the percentage was 17·6 per cent. Information about credit on non-bank credit cards is not available.

EC Member States

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the national income, 60 per cent. of that figure and the Government debt of each member state in the EC, indicating the differences in accounting treatment where relevant.

Mr. Maples: For data on the national income of each member state in the EC, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to him on 12 November 1991, at columns *506-7*.

Data for the level of Government debt are not yet available on a comparable basis for all EC member states. Following are estimates of the ratio of general Government gross debt, valued in nominal terms, to GDP as at 31 December 1989.

General Government gross debt, 1989 (per cent. of GDP)

	Per cent.
United Kingdom[1]	37·4
Belgium	130·7
Denmark[2]	58·0
France	46·6
Western Germany	43·4
Greece[2]	76·1
Ireland[2]	125·1
Italy	98·8
Luxembourg	8·5
Netherlands	79·7
Portugal[2]	71·2
Spain	43·2

[1] At 31 March 1990.
[2] Central government only.

[3] Per cent. of GNP.
Source: OECD Economic Outlook No. 49, July 1991; except for Luxembourg and Portugal: from EC Annual Economic Report (revised), May 1991.

Savings Ratio

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of the savings ratio in 1989 and 1990; and what is the estimated level for the current year.

Mr. Maples: The personal sector's savings ratio was 7·1 per cent. in 1989 and 9·2 per cent. in 1990. During the first half of 1991 it averaged 10·5 per cent.

Council Tax

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the average income of householders in each of the proposed council tax bands, and of the ratio of the average income level in the top band to those in *(a)* the middle and *(b)* the lowest band.

Mr. Maude: None.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of average earnings is paid in taxation, including income tax, indirect taxes and national insurance contributions, for the average householder in *(a)* the lowest, *(b)* the middle and *(c)* the highest of the proposed council tax bands.

Mr. Maude: No such estimates of taxes paid are available.

Illegal Arms Transfers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 came into force its powers have been invoked to work with foreign customs services to intercept illegal arms or military equipment transfers; what has been the cost to date of implementing the Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* Three requests which are arms related have been received by HM Customs. The directly identifiable costs to Customs of handling these requests has been approximately £45,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

BBC World Services

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries to which the BBC external services broadcast.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The BBC World Service in English is broadcast throughout the world. Broadcasts are also made to relevant countries in the following 35 languages:

Arabic, Russian, Spanish (for Latin America), Polish, Mandarin, Cantonese, French, German, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Portuguese, Hindi, Persian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Serbian, Croatian, Greek, Indonesian, Urdu, Bengali, Hausa, Swahili, Vietnamese, Finnish, Burmese, Pashto, Somali, Thai, Slovene, Tamil, Nepali, Sinhala.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's planned relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), on 16 October at column *156*.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the interests of Gibraltar are represented within the European Community and the European Parliament.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Gibraltar's interests are represented by the British Government in the European Community. In the European Parliament there is an informal arrangement whereby a number of British MEPs take a close and active interest in Gibraltar.

Ethiopia

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of Ethiopia towards good government.

Mrs. Chalker: A broad-based transitional Government was formed in August. Elections to a new national assembly are due within two years. Her Majesty's Government welcome the transitional Government's commitment to respect for human rights, democracy and the liberalisation of the largely state-controlled economy inherited from the Mengistu regime.

Kenya

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Kenya following the arrest of 20 leading Opposition leaders on 15 November.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave the hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 22 November, at column *323*, and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 20 November, at column *266*.

Mozambique

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will cease providing military aid to Mozambique.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Foreign Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to reject any proposal for a common EC foreign policy or for foreign policy co-ordination which would impinge on the United Kingdom's relations with other Commonwealth countries or restrict the right of the United Kingdom to work with other Commonwealth countries on any matter of Commonwealth concern.

The Prime Minister: We shall not accept any treaty text which would impair our ability to maintain and develop our relations with other Commonwealth countries.

Livestock Premiums

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food co-ordinate the payment of livestock premiums so that all farmers in Great Britain receive payments at the same time.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 14 May that it was hoped to pay the majority of first advances under the sheep annual premium scheme no later than early autumn. This target was comfortably achieved in all parts of the United Kingdom. Payment of the second advance is already under way. Each agriculture department aims to make payments under the livestock schemes as quickly as possible. Producers' interests would not be best served by co-ordinating payments in the way suggested.

Traffic, Parliament Square

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the reasons why all traffic was stopped from entering Parliament square at 15.05 hours on 19 November.

The Prime Minister: The management of traffic in London is an operational matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I understand however that traffic in Parliament square was held up for a short period at 15.05 hours on 19 November to facilitate the passage of the President of Hungary to the Palace of Westminster.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to co-ordinate the activities of the Department of the Environment in dealing with homeless people and the activities of the Resettlement Agency in funding replacement bed spaces for closed resettlement units.

The Prime Minister: Regular discussions are held between Ministers and officials of the Department of the Environment and the Department of Social Security and the Resettlement Agency. At a local level, the agency holds detailed discussions on the provision of replacement beds for resettlement units which have closed or are to close with local authorities and the voluntary organisations in the area concerned.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to the answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column 43, he will publish the text of the letter from Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington to the Chief of the Shoshone Nation regarding the continuation of British nuclear testing in Nevada.

The Prime Minister: I have arranged for the text of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to the reply of 5 November, *Official Report*, column 43, he will publish the text of the letter on nuclear testing from his Australian counterpart.

The Prime Minister: Any decision to publish the text of the letter is one for the Australian Government.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to introduce a tax-free, non-means tested benefit designed to cover the extra costs incurred by disabled people in their daily lives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance, which will be both tax-free and non-income-related, will be introduced in April 1992. For people disabled before the age of 65, it will replace and extend the help with the extra costs of disability currently available through attendance allowance and mobility allowance.

Income Support

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will undertake to restore the full rate of income support for those aged under 25 years.

Miss Widdecombe: There are no plans to remove the differential between the levels of income support personal allowances for those aged up to 24 years and those aged 25 and over.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many resettlement units outside London have been closed since 1987; and whether dates have been set for closing the remaining units;

(2) what funding is being made available for resettlement unit replacement bed spaces; and what allowance for inflation is given for both revenue and capital costs;

(3) what consultation is taking place with housing organisations, local authorities and residents regarding the planned closure of resettlement units outside London;

(4) when it is expected the Leeds resettlement unit will close; and whether the planned number of replacement bed spaces will cater for the same number of beds as in the existing resettlement unit;

(5) if he will ensure that proceeds of the sale of land and buildings in the resettlement unit closure programme will be used to fund replacement beds.

Miss. Widdecombe: The management of the resettlement units replacement programme is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many social fund inspectors were employed on 30 June 1991;

(2) how many applications for review by a social fund inspector were outstanding for more than one month on 30 June 1991.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the Social Fund Commissioner that on 30 June 1991, there were 54 social fund inspectors employed and 1,666 review applications outstanding for more than one month. Since 30 June 1991 the Social Fund Commissioner has recruited a further 12 inspectors.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in the current financial year of paying a £10 per week per person allowance for people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation without adequate cooking facilities.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Benefits Uprating

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list any occasions when, in benefit upratings from 1986 onwards, the power to round benefit rates up or down under section 63(5) of the Social Security Act 1986 has not been used to round rates to the nearest 5p indicating by how much and in which direction any rounding diverged from that practice.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The table lists those rates whose increased amounts, from April 1987 to April 1991 upratings inclusive, were not rounded in the manner specified. In each case the rate was rounded up or down to the nearest amount indicated except where otherwise specified. The 1986 uprating order was made before the commencement of the Social Security Act 1986.

	Rates
Child dependency increases	
Level at which CDIs payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner	
for first child	£5
for each subsequent child	£1
Earnings rules	
Therapeutic earnings limit	50p
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	£1
Income Support	
Reduction in benefit for strikers	50p
Industrial Death Benefit	
Widow's pension (lower rate)	1p
Industrial Disablement Pension and Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis Workman's Compensation Scheme	
18 or over—100 per cent. rate[1]	10p
—lesser rates[1]	1p
Under 18 —lesser rates[1]	1p
Maximum life gratuity[1]	£10
Unemployability Supplement —middle rate	10p
Constant Attendance Allowance Normal maximum rate	10p
Invalidity Benefit	
Invalidity Allowance —middle rate	10p
Non-Dependant Deductions (IS/HB)[2]	
Rent rebates and allowances	
Aged 18 or over and in remunerative work[3]	10p above
Others, aged 18 or over, or on Income Support and over 25[3]	10p above
Low earnings threshold	5p below
Other deductions (IS) (Pre-1992)	
Deductions for direct payments	
Fuel debt 5 per cent. rate	5p above
Fuel debt 10 per cent. rate	5p above
Arrears of housing costs	5p above
Arrears of water rates	5p above
Deductions for arrears of Community Charge (from April 1990)	
Single debtor	5p above
Couple debtors both with IS	5p above
Retirement Pension	
Additional pension	1p
Graduated Retirement Benefit (unit)	0·01p
Contracted out deductions (from pre-April 1988 earnings) and graduated retirement benefit	1p
Contracted out deductions (CODs) and increments to CODs (from post-April 1988 earnings)	1p
Statutory Sick Pay/Statutory Maternity Pay[4]	5p below
Widow's Benefit	
Widow's pension (age related)	1p

[1] Industrial Disablement Pension only.
[2] New Non-Dependent deductions from April 1992.
[3] Non-Dependent deductions from April 1991 only.
[4] The information for Statutory Sick Pay/Statutory Maternity Pay relates to the 1989 to 1991 upratings. Fron April 1992 rates are to be rounded to the nearest fivepence.

Benefits

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support and unemployment benefit claimants have *(a)* successfully and *(b)* unsuccessfully claimed income support under the hardship rule during each quarter from October 1989 onwards in Wales; and how many such claims were in doubt due to (i) not actively seeking work, (ii) refusing suitable employment and (iii) availability for work.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Playing Fields

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has relating to the redevelopment of school and educational playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has provided funding for the Sports Council to establish a national register of recreational land, which will enable gains and losses to be monitored. The register will include educational playing fields. Decisions on the disposal of playing fields at local education authority maintained schools are for the

education authority. However, in view of public concern about the loss of playing fields, we are considering the issue.

Further Education (Special Needs)

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision has been made for the further education funding councils to consult people and organisations with specialist knowledge of special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Further and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament requires the further education funding councils to have regard to the requirements of those with learning difficulties in making provision for further education. The funding councils will be able to determine what consultation is needed to enable them to carry out this duty effectively.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure students with special educational needs wishing to pursue courses of further or adult education are enabled to choose between provision in schools and provision in colleges of further education.

Mr. Eggar: The Further and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament will ensure that a wide range of educational provision continues to be available for students with special educational needs, including provision in schools and in colleges of further education.

Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the bids submitted by North Yorkshire local education authority for resources from the voluntary aided schools capital programme and the cash value of these bids in 1987-88 and in each year since then; and if he will list the bids approved and resources allocated in cash terms and at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is as follows:

North Yorkshire local education authority
Voluntary aided schools capital programme 1987-88 to 1992-93

Planned major projects	*Bids for new projects (cash)*	*Allocation (cash)*	*Allocation (1987-88 prices) £000s*
1987-88			
1. Ermysted Boys Grammar School, Skipton	661	—	—
2. St. Joseph's RC Primary School, Tadcaster	207	—	—
3. St. Aelred's RC Primary School, York	234	—	—
4. St. Peter's RC Primary School, Scarborough	463	—	—
Planned minor works	133	—	—
1988-89			
1. Ermysted Boys Grammar School, Skipton	773	—	—
2. St. Joseph's RC Primary School, Tadcaster	135	—	—
3. St. Peter's RC Primary School, Scarborough	504	—	—
4. St. Aidan's CE High School, Harrogate	747	—	—
5. Manor CE Secondary School, York	134	—	—
Planned minor works	442	100	93
1989-90			
1. Ermysted Boys Grammar School, Skipton	744	—	—
2. St. Peter's RC Primary School, Scarborough	570	—	—
3. Manor CE Secondary School, York	144	—	—
Planned minor works	474	53	46
1990-91			
1. St. Peter's RC Primary School, Scarborough	666	[1]23	19
2. St. Aidan's CE High School, Harrogate	891	[1]17	13
3. Manor CE Secondary School, York	176	—	—
Planned minor works	532	37	25
1991-92			
1. St. Peter's RC Primary School, Scarborough	692	260	196
2. St. Aidan's CE High School, Harrogate	447	300	226
3. St. Wilfred's Primary School, York	722	[1]26	20
4. Manor CE Secondary School, York	135	—	—
Planned minor works	585	183	138
1992-93			
1. St. Wilfred's RC Primary School, York	515	n.a.	n.a.

Note:
[1]Projects on Design List—allocation in respect of design fees only.
For 1992-93 bids for new minor works invited only in respect of Basic Need or Surplus Place removal. Allocations do not include committed expenditure for projects started in earlier years.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he advised local education authorities that they may no longer apply for resources from the voluntary aided schools capital programme for schools needing work to remedy accommodation deficiencies or overcrowding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has given local education authorities no such advice. They are free to bid for projects at voluntary aided schools needing work to remedy accommodation deficiencies or overcrowding, and many have done so. Decisions on which projects will receive allocations will be announced in December.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he raised the limit for minor works projects funded by the voluntary aided schools capital programme from £120,000 to £250,000; how he consulted local education authorities about this change; what assessment he has made of local education authorities requirement for resources to fund minor works projects costing over £120,000; how much extra money he intends to distribute to local education authorities for funding minor works; and how much of the voluntary aided schools capital programme for 1991-92 was allocated in respect of projects costing between £120,000 and £250,000.

Mr. Fallon: The limit for minor works projects funded by the voluntary aided schools capital programme is to be raised from £120,000 to £250,000 with effect from 1992-93 as announced in the Department's letter of 30 May to local education authorities inviting bids for 1992-93 capital expenditure. Local authority associations were consulted in March on the proposed change, and were content. Local education authorities' requirements for resources to fund minor works projects costing over £120,000 have been assessed on the basis of previous years' bids. A decision on how much extra money to distribute to local education authorities for minor works will be announced when allocations for all voluntary aided school projects are announced in December. A total of £1·5 million was allocated in respect of new projects costing between £120,000 and £250,000 in 1991-92.

Parents Charter

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in making his request to head teachers that schoolchildren should take copies of the parents charter for distribution to their parents, what advice he took to ensure that this will not contravene section 45 of the Education Act 1986.

Mr. Eggar: There is no question of the distribution of the parents charter falling within the scope of sections 44 and 45 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, which relate to political teaching in schools, nor within the scope of section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 which relates to the distribution of political propaganda.

The parents charter is addressed not to pupils but to their parents. It sets out in objective terms the rights which parents now have in relation to their children's education, and those changes which the Government propose to introduce if Parliament gives its approval. It fully meets the published guidelines on Government publicity.

The decision on distribution is one for the governors and head teacher of each school, and not for local education authorities. The majority of schools have already responded positively to my right hon. and learned Friend's invitation to order copies for their parents. Others should follow their example and not be intimidated or misled by inaccurate advice.

Higher Education

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the age participation index figure for higher education in Scotland and in England and Wales, respectively, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Separate age participation indices for England and Wales are not calculated.

The available figures are as follows:—

Academic year	*Great Britain*[1]	*Scotland*[2]
1981-82	13·1	18·1
1982-83	13·3	18·0
1983-84	13·1	18·7
1984-85	13·7	19·4
1985-86	13·9	19·1
1986-87	14·0	19·7
1987-88	14·6	20·9
1988-89	15·1	21·2
1989-90	17·1	24·5
1990-91	[3]19·3	n/a

[1] Defined as the number of under 21 year old United Kingdom domiciled initial entrants expressed as a proportion of the average of the total number of 18 and 19 year olds in the population. Initial entrants are those students entering a course of higher education for the first time. *Source:* DES.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Defined as the number of Scottish domiciled entrants to full-time higher education anywhere in the United Kingdom who are aged 20 or less, expressed as a percentage of the population of 17 year olds one year previously. *Source:* SOED.
n/a = not available.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of full-time undergraduate and post-graduate students, respectively, attending universities in Great Britain were matriculated at Scottish universities at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In the academic year 1990-91, 16·1 and 12 per cent. of full-time undergraduates and post-graduates respectively attending universities in Great Britain were matriculated at Scottish universities.

Scottish Universities

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the recurrent grant distributed by the Universities Funding Council or the University Grants Committee went to Scottish universities in each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Scottish universities' share of the recurrent grant allocated to GB universities by the University Grants Committee or the Universities Funding Council was 15 per cent. in academic years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 and 14 per cent. in 1989-90 and 1990-91. These percentages are based on the figures issued by the UGC or the UFC in their recurrent grant announcement letters before the beginning of the years in question.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the percentage of students at Scottish universities who are domiciled in England and abroad, respectively, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In the academic 1990-91, 19·2 per cent. and 13·8 per cent. of students attending Scottish universities were domiciled in England or overseas.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Environmental Issues

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now update the table on page XV of the Environment Committee's first report on environmental issues in Northern Ireland, of Session 1990-91, providing a list of known legislative commitments for DOE (NI).

Mr. Needham: Copies of the legislative programme prepared by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland environment service during November 1991 are available in the Library of the House.

Hypothermia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing how many people categorised by age died of hypothermia, or illnesses associated with hypothermia, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Deaths from hypothermia in Northern Ireland[1]

Year	Disease	All ages	Under 1 year	1-59	60-	65-	70-	75-	80-	85-	90-	95 and over
1979	Underlying cause	13	—	3	—	1	5	2	1	—	1	—
1980	Underlying cause	18	1	2	1	2	3	4	3	2	—	—
1981	Underlying cause	10	—	2	—	1	1	1	3	—	2	—
1982	Underlying cause	17	—	2	—	1	5	2	3	2	1	1
1983	Underlying cause	10	—	—	1	—	2	2	3	2	—	—
1984[2]	Underlying cause	11	—	1	1	2	1	—	4	2	—	—
1985	Any mention	28	—	2	1	5	5	6	5	1	3	—
	Underlying cause	16	—	1	1	5	2	3	3	1	—	—
1986	Any mention	32	—	4	1	2	4	6	5	4	5	1
	Underlying cause	14	—	2	—	1	3	3	1	1	3	—
1987	Any mention	21	—	9	1	2	1	3	2	3	—	—
	Underlying cause	7	—	3	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	—
1988	Any mention	18	—	3	—	2	5	1	2	3	2	—
	Underlying cause	7	—	2	—	—	3	—	—	1	1	—
1989	Any mention	14	—	2	—	1	—	2	3	3	3	—
	Underlying cause	6	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	2	—
1990[3]	Any mention	13	—	3	1	4	2	1	1	1	—	—
	Underlying cause	9	—	3	—	2	2	1	—	1	—	—

Notes:
[1] *Source:* General Register Office.
[2] Prior to 1985 statistics were not collected on cases where hypothermia was shown as an associated cause of death.
[3] Figures for 1990 are provisional.

Maydown Incinerator

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now clarify the position regarding the proposal for a toxic-hazardous waste incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry, in the light of the recent statement by the Minister for the Environment in the Republic of Ireland that the Republic would have to construct a toxic waste incinerator in the near future.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has not received a planning application for a toxic-hazardous waste incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry. A planning application for a major development involving a hazardous waste incinerator would not be determined without a public inquiry held under the terms of article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Unemployed Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many unemployed claimants have, since April 1990 *(a)* been issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work, *(b)* had their claim referred to an adjudicating officer for not actively seeking work, *(c)* had their claims allowed or disallowed for not actively seeking work, *(d)* had their claim referred to an adjudicating officer for refusing suitable employment and *(e)* how many of those in *(d)* have had their benefit (i) disqualified or (ii) not disqualified.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alex Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Minister for Overseas Development last visited Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: I last visited Ethiopia on 28-29 January this year. Senior officials visited in October and November.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce increased levels of aid to Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: We have provided increasing levels of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia. Since September 1990, we have committed almost £53 million for this purpose, including our share of EC emergency aid. We expect to continue to respond generously to meet emergency needs.

We are considering the future shape and level of our bilateral development aid programme. Our major contribution to Ethiopia's development, however, will

continue to be through the multilateral development institutions, particularly the EC. Ethiopia is the largest single recipient of aid under Lomé IV.

Yemen

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to impose cuts in development aid to Yemen.

Mrs. Chalker: We keep under continual review the level of aid to all countries in the light of the resources available, of the policies being pursued by the recipient Governments, and of changes in our priorities.

Simple Truth Appeal

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, 11 November, column *352*, regarding the £43,210,000 raised overseas for the Simple Truth Appeal, when this was paid into the appeal; and when it was paid out.

Mrs. Chalker: Of the £43,210,000 raised overseas by the Simple Truth Appeal, £31,468,000 was contributed by overseas Governments and £11,742,000 by individual and corporate donors. These contributions were made direct to United Nations and Red Cross agencies.

Somalia

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of aid to Somalia for the last 10 years.

Mrs. Chalker: Details of United Kingdom bilateral aid to Somalia since 1981 are as follows:

£000

Year	*Project aid*	*Programme aid*	*Technical co-operation*	*Disaster relief and food aid*	*Total*
1981	108	144	865	1,324	2,441
1982	586	—	906	1,036	2,528
1983	1,160	—	1,241	86	2,486
1984	555	—	1,456	47	2,058
1985	61	300	1,368	9	1,737
1986	630	1,377	1,679	255	3,941
1987	199	2,779	3,882	433	7,293
1988	3	1,733	4,703	124	6,614
1989	—	1,597	3,546	152	5,295
1990	—	101	1,577	—	1,678

So far in 1991 we have committed £5·13 million disaster relief to Somalia, including our share of EC emergency aid. The development aid programme was closed in January 1991 due to the deterioration in security.

ODA Review

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Overseas Development Administration will produce its next annual review.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA's annual review was published earlier this month. The publication date for the 1992 review has not yet been decided.

Know-how Funds

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all those countries currently in receipt of know-how funds, the amounts of money and costs of services provided, and those countries currently being considered for inclusion in the scheme.

Mrs. Chalker: The know-how fund currently funds projects in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic states and the Soviet Union. It funded projects in the former GDR from April 1990 until German reunification. We have no plans at present to extend the fund to any additional countries.

Expenditure under the Fund in 1989-90 and 1990-91, and commitments to date in 1991-92 by country are as follows:

£ million

Country	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Poland	2·3	10·9	12·1
Hungary	n.a.	1·6	5·9
Czechoslovakia	n.a.	2·0	4·3
Ex-GDR	n.a.	0·5	n.a.
Bulgaria	n.a.	n.a.	1·3
Romania	n.a.	n.a.	1·3
Baltic states/Soviet Union	n.a.	n.a.	8·8

The budget for 1991-92 has been increased to £46 million covering all countries.

The cost of services paid for by the know-how fund depends on the nature of the services and of the project. We have to date committed funds to some 400 projects. The report on the first 1·5 years of the know-how fund give an idea of the individual costs involved. This is available in the House Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Autumn Statement

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the programmes and purposes on which the extra cash announced in the autumn statement will be spent.

Mr. Jackson: The additional planned resources will go towards helping unemployed people, improving the skills of the work force and assisting small businesses and enterprise. The details of the plans will be announced in the departmental report that will be published early next year.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers beginning apprenticeship as bricklayers, joiners, electricians, plasterers and plumbers in each year since 1981.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available about apprenticeships according to the year in which they begin.

Training Credits

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training credits have been issued in the pilot areas to young people; how many young people have taken them up; what other information he has on the take-up of credits in those areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As at 13 October 1991, some 27,000 training credits had been issued within the 11 pilot schemes. Over 12,000 of these have already been used by young people to obtain high-quality training of their choice. This number continues to rise. We hope to publish evaluation results from the first nine months of operating training credits in the spring of 1992. Evaluation will, of course, continue well beyond that, to identify the achievements of young people currently beginning training and the impact of credits on young people who leave school in 1992 and subsequently.

Employment Action

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest information he has about the number of people who have taken up places on employment action; how many have left employment action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not yet available. Employment action came into operation only on 1 October, but we are confident that, by the end of March 1992, there will be provision in place to help 30,000 people.

First Aid Code of Practice

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he proposes to take to provide further supplies of the first aid approved code of practice —ISBN 0 11 8855360—in HMSO outlets; what reasons account for the shortfall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive has already made arrangements for further supplies of this publication to be made available to HMSO outlets. The reasons for the present shortfall are the unexpectedly high demand for the publication and some small delay in reprinting due to minor changes being made in one of its annexes.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the level of employment in the Leeds metropolitan district *(a)* in manufacturing industries, *(b)* in the service sector and *(c)* in all industries and services for (i) male and female employees, (ii) full time and (iii) part time; for each year since 1979 both as a number and as a percentage.

Mr. Jackson: Information for employees in employment by district is only available from the censuses of employment for 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1989. This can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Low Pay

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the number and percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women working full time and part time earning less than (i) £2·00 per hour, (ii) £2·50 per hour, (iii) £3·00 per hour, (iv) £3·50 per hour, (v) £4·00 per hour, (vi) £4·50 per hour and (vii) £5·00 per hour in the (1) Leeds, West constituency and (2) the Leeds metropolitan district.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the 1991 new earnings survey closest to that requested is given in the following tables:

Metropolitan County of West Yorkshire
Employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence and whose hourly earnings—excluding overtime—were below the following specified amounts

April 1991

	Number in sample	*Per cent. of total*	*Number in sample*	*Per cent. of total*
	£2·00		*£2·50*	
Full-time men	16	0·5	34	1·2
Full-time women	11	0·7	32	2·0
Part-time men	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Part-time women	23	2·2	54	5·2
	£3·00		*£3·40*	
Full-time men	94	3·2	204	6·9
Full-time women	150	9·5	284	18·0
Part-time men	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Part-time women	209	20·2	420	40·7
	£3·60		*£4·00*	
Full-time men	305	10·4	493	16·8
Full-time women	371	23·6	523	33·2
Part-time men	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Part-time women	505	48·9	663	64·2
	£4·50		*£4·80*	
Full-time men	753	25·6	948	32·3
Full-time women	700	44·5	807	51·3
Part-time men	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Part-time women	773	74·8	819	79·3
	£5·40			
Full-time men	1,305	44·4		
Full-time women	965	61·3		
Part-time men	[1]—	[1]—		
Part-time women	877	84·9		

Source: New Earnings Survey.
"[1]—" denotes information not available.

Training Credits

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress towards the planned national extension of training credits for young people.

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to be able to announce today the seven training and enterprise councils and two local enterprise companies which will develop training credits schemes to operate from April 1993. These schemes, together with the existing 11 training credits pilots, will mean that some 20 per cent. of the national total of 16 and 17-year-old school leavers will be able to benefit from the increased opportunities offered by

training credits. It remains the Government's intention to expand training credits progressively, so that by 1996, within the lifetime of the next Parliament, all young people aged 16 or 17 leaving full-time education will have the offer of a training credit.

The TECs and local enterprise companies that will develop training credits schemes to operate from April 1993:

Calderdale and Kirklees
Isle of Wight
Merseyside
Northamptonshire
Staffordshire
South Thames
Mid Glamorgan
Caithness and Sutherland
Dunbartonshire

HEALTH

Meat Inspection

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet the Institution of Environmental Health Officers to discuss whether meat inspection should remain a local authority function.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave to her on 21 November at column *299*.

Hospices

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total value of extra help provided by the Government for hospices over the last 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Sir R. Rhodes James) on 18 November at column *43*.

Health Care, London

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the terms of reference and scope of the Tomlinson inquiry into delivery of health care in London; what assistance the inquiry is obtaining from the King's fund study in the same field; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The terms of reference of Sir Bernard Tomlinson's inquiry are:

"To advise the Secretaries of State for Health and Education and Science on how the relevant statutory authorities are addressing the provision of health care in inner London, working within the framework of the reformed NHS, including the balance between acute and primary health services; and the organisation and provision of undergraduate medical teaching, postgraduate medical education and research and development; taking account of:

the health needs of London's resident and day-time population;

the emerging purchasing plans of health authorities and their likely impact on inner London hospitals;

future developments in the provision of acute and primary care; and

the need to maintain high quality patient care and, as a foundation for this, high standards of medical teaching and research and development."

I understand that Sir Bernard and members of his expert team have already held useful discussions with members of the King's Fund Commission studying health services in London, with a view to future co-operation.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of those general practitioner fundholding practices in England which have set up private companies for aspects of their patients care.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Hospital Security

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the security arrangements in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: Security arrangements at NHS hospitals are the responsibility of and can best be determined by local hospital managers, in the light of their knowledge of their premises and the level of access necessary for patients, staff and visitors.

To help local managers, the National Association of Health Authorities issued the NHS Security Manual to all health authorities in 1984. This is now being revised and updated with the help of a £37,000 grant from the Department.

The new manual will take account of the most recent developments in security and crime prevention techniques and is being developed in consultation with key experts in the field and other interested private and public sector organisations. It will be available for circulation to health authorities and NHS trusts early next year.

Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to introduce changes to the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Bill was introduced in another place on 5 November.

Pregnancy Terminations

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which EC countries permit the treatment of non-resident women for legal termination of pregnancy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mifegyne

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many briefing seminars concerning Mifegyne have been held by Roussel UK; where they were held; and approximately how many health personnel attended each seminar.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Roussel UK for the information requested.

Mental Handicap

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on how financial support for the mentally handicapped in residential care is calculated regarding training, education, employment and other day care elements; and how it is planned to be changed after 1 April 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: The provision of day care and other personal social services is the responsibility of local authority social services departments. They are responsible for assessing the need for services in individual cases and for deciding how this might appropriately be met. This will not alter after 1 April 1993.

Midwives

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many student midwives completed training in each of the last four years; and how many new midwives positions were created in that period.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of student midwives who completed training in England in the last four years and became eligible for registration is as follows:

Year (ended 31 March)	*Number*
1988	2,521
1989	2,088
1990	2,499
1991	2,336

Note: These figures were provided by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Information regarding the number of new midwifery positions created in the same period is not centrally available.

Employment of Children

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring the outstanding provisions of the Employment of Children Act 1973 into force.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973.

The main legislation governing the part-time employment of children under minimum school leaving age is the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. This sets out general restrictions governing hours of work and conditions of employment. Further restrictions are contained in local authority byelaws made under the Act. The provisions of primary legislation and byelaws serve as an effective framework to protect children who work part time.

Huntington's Chorea

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spends in research into the cause and cure of Huntington's chorea.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through this Department, is the main agency for funding medical research in this country. In the last financial year (1990-91) the council spent £100,000 on research relevant to Huntington's chorea. The council is always willing to consider for support soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications. The health departments, universities and medical schools may also be funding some research on Huntington's chorea but information on this is not collected centrally.

Hospitals, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of Mossley Hill, hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: Mossley Hill hospital has a secure future. Liverpool health authority are currently implementing plans to centralise mental health services on the Mossley Hill site. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Michael Emberton, the chairman of Liverpool health authority, for further details.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any plans to amalgamate the Royal Liverpool teaching hospital and Broadgreen hospital, or to transfer services from one hospital to the other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I am not aware of any plan of the Royal Liverpool University Hospitals trust and the Broadgreen Hospital trust to amalgamate as a single trust. Any such proposal would need to be put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State formally for consideration and would involve the dissolution of the two existing trusts and further public consultation.

Any transfer of health services is a matter for the providers of those services in consultation with purchasers. This is a matter for local discussion and decision.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he intends to seek tenders for private capital to finance the hotel residential accommodation at the proposed obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool;

(2) how many tenders have been put out for the proposed obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool;

(3) what is his Department's capital limit on the proposed obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool;

(4) if his Department intends to provide funding for the whole of the capital cost of the acute block and the hotel accommodation for the proposed obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool;

(5) what are his Department's building cost estimates for the 163-bed acute block and the 100 hotel residential beds of the proposed obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool; what were the trust application building cost estimates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1991]:* Approval in principle was given by the Department in September to a new obstetric and gynaecology hospital in Liverpool. The base costs, for approval in principle purposes, was estimated to be around £16 million. This figure was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 10 September and was quoted in the trust application document. With additions for fees, equipment and on-costs (infrastructure) the cost is estimated to be £26·46 million to which will be added VAT and inflation.

Approval in principle does not signal a specific allocation of capital. Any proposal to use private sector

capital must be demonstrated to represent value for money and would require the approval of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His approval has not been sought in relation to this scheme.

Estimates of building costs are made by the relevant health authority, whose responsibility it is to seek tenders. The district health authority has not yet reached that stage.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Limited Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing which completed inspectors' reports relating to public limited companies have not been published over the last 10 years.

Mr. Redwood: The table lists all inspections into public companies under sections 432 and 442 of the Companies Act 1985 (or their predecessor sections) where the inspectors have submitted their final report since 1 November 1981 and that report remains unpublished.

The decision whether to publish the reports marked with an asterisk remains under consideration. Substantial interim reports on Bryanston Finance Limited and Dunlop Holdings Limited were published on 22 March 1983 and 17 February 1981 respectively.

Date of appointment	*Company Name*	*Date of report*
12 May 1975	Bryanston Finance Ltd. [now Ramor Investments Ltd.]	27 April 1987
25 July 1980	Dunlop Holdings Limited	12 November 1981
8 March 1982	Euroflame Holdings plc	27 June 1987
11 March 1983	British Anzani plc	*28 November 1986
25 February 1983	Hartley Baird plc	21 December 1983
9 May 1985	Hartley Baird plc	23 May 1986
26 May 1989	Blue Arrow plc	*4 June 1991
23 June 1989	The Bestwood plc	*26 March 1991
6 February 1990	BOM Holdings plc	*2 August 1991

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which no unelected person would be able to sit on the councils of the bodies recognised as supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which auditing firms criticised in the inspectors' report would be required to return the audit fee to the company.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which it would be a criminal offence for the recognised supervisory bodies to recommend passive auditing guidelines.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Caparo Judgment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now propose legislation under which the Caparo judgment would be reversed.

Mr. Redwood: We have no plans to do so.

Vehicle Prices

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the relative pre-tax pricing of vehicles in the United Kingdom for ordinary car buyers and for fleet buyers and for purchases of the same vehicle on the continent; and what plans he has to introduce legislation or take other steps to safeguard the consumer's interests in this area.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about car prices. A reference relating to the supply of new motor cars was made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 9 May 1990. In making the reference the Director General of Fair Trading drew attention to concern about apparent differences between prices in the United Kingdom and other European countries. On 31 October 1991 the Commission delivered their report to the Secretary of State who is currently considering it. The report will be published as soon as is practicable. The contents of all MMC reports remain confidential until publication. If the MMC find no adverse effects the Secretary of State has no power to act. If the MMC have reached any adverse findings he will decide what steps, if any, should be taken to remedy the situation. He will also consider whether or not to announce a period of consultation before reaching his conclusions if the report is adverse.

Office of Telecommunications

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for the Office of Telecommunications for each year since it was established *(a)* staffing levels and *(b)* its annual cost at both actual and current prices.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 November 1991]:* The staffing levels and the annual expenditure of OFTEL in each financial year since it was established are as follows:

	Staff level (actual)	*Financial expenditure actual £k*	*1990-91 prices £k*
1984-85	53	1,668	2,373
1985-86	91	2,792	3,765
1986-87	109	3,404	4,444
1987-88	115	3,573	4,424
1988-89	117	3,825	4,419
1989-90	118	4,291	4,655
1990-91	130	6,424	6,424
[1]1991-92	150	7,375	6,893

[1] provisional

Note: OFTEL's expenditure is fully recovered from licence fee income.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the annual salary of the Director General of Telecommunications for each year since his appointment, giving year-on-year percentage rises.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 November 1991]:* The figures requested are as follows:

Year ended 30 June	Salary £	Percentage increase
1985	50,000	—
1986	55,022	10·0
1987	60,224	9·5
1988	62,903	4·4
1989	66,341	5·5
1990	71,780	8·2
1991	81,915	14·1
1992	87,805	7·2

Trade Statistics

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the total exports and imports of the United Kingdom with the other countries of the European Community for the years 1989 and 1990 and the first six months of 1991 together with the export to import ratio for each period.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 November 1991]:* Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

European Co-operative Statute

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the United Kingdom Government's policy on the draft European co-operative statute.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The Draft European Co-operative Statute is still at a draft stage. Should a formal proposal emerge from the Commission, the Government will consult widely among interested organisations, as is the normal practice.

TRANSPORT

Overloaded Lorries

10. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to reduce the problem caused by overloaded lorries.

Mr. Chope: About twice as many vehicles will be weighed by the vehicle inspectorate this year as five years ago.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

11. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about a rail link to Manchester airport from the south.

Mr. McLoughlin: The main market is to and from Manchester and other points to the north of the airport. That will be well served by the link which is currently under construction. I understand British Rail has no plans to build a southern spur to the rail link to Manchester airport at present.

Channel Tunnel

12. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the rail connections between the channel tunnel and north-west England in time for the opening of the tunnel.

Mr. Rifkind: British Rail plans to invest over £1·4 billion in channel tunnel services. The north-west will have through passenger services and freight terminals at Trafford Park and Liverpool.

13. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about British Rail's proposals for the location of rail freight depots to serve European destinations via the channel tunnel, with specific reference to the needs of south-west England.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has announced the locations of all nine of its proposed channel tunnel freight terminals. Initially the terminal at Cardiff will serve south Wales and the south-west of England. British Rail is exploring the prospect of a terminal at Avonmouth.

16. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the establishment of freight terminals in the north-west of England for ongoing carriage of trade through the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has announced that there will be channel tunnel freight terminals in Trafford Park (Manchester) and Seaforth (Merseyside) to link industry in the north-west with the channel tunnel. Both terminals are due to open in 1993.

17. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on environmental protection and compensation for residents of north-west Kent along the line of the recently-announced route for the channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

Mr. Freeman: There will be full public consultation on environmental protection measures, and voluntary purchase will be offered for homes required for, or seriously affected by, the construction and operation of the rail link. Neither the protection measures, nor the purchase scheme, can be adequately defined until the preferred route has been engineered in greater detail.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to improve British Rail freight links between Southampton and the channel tunnel.

Mr. McLoughlin: The planning and running of its international freight services is a commercial matter for British Rail. Freight from Southampton through the channel tunnel will be routed through the freight terminal at Willesden.

26. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what marketing strategy is to be used by British Rail in disposing of the residential properties they have bought in the Warwick gardens area of Dulwich in anticipation of the channel tunnel rail link going through south-east London.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail will seek to minimise any disruption of the local housing market by operating a carefully controlled sales programme.

23. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the passenger and freight railway services proposed between south Wales and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: On 25 October I visited the site of the planned channel tunnel freight terminal in Cardiff.

Transport Expenditure

14. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a geographical breakdown by United Kingdom nation and region for the additional projected increase in transport expenditure for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a geographical breakdown by United Kingdom nation and region of the additional projected increase in transport expenditure for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: British Rail's spending will include projects that benefit the whole of the United Kingdom; but its investment programme for the two years is not yet settled, and so no geographical analysis can be made.

Road Pricing

15. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent calculations his Department has made as to the impact that road pricing would have on traffic flows in Greater London and the south-east.

Mr. Chope: We are now beginning detailed research to establish whether road pricing could become a practicable option for London and what its many effects would be. This assessment will include the likely impact on traffic flows.

A10

18. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects completion of the dualling of the A10 between Cambridge and Ely.

Mr. Chope: Announcement of a preferred route following consultation is expected in spring 1994. Later progress will depend upon progress with statutory procedures and resources available for the roads programme.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

19. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has to use its data base for commercial marketing purposes.

Mr. Chope: The DVLA's intention to explore the commercial use of its databases is included in its 1991-92 business plan, a copy of which is in the Library.

Network SouthEast

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about further investment in rolling stock by Network SouthEast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Around 800 passenger vehicles are currently on order for Network SouthEast which will significantly improve the quality of service for many passengers. These are as follows:

Network SouthEast new trains on order

Route	*Number of Vehicles*	*Class*	*End delivery*
Chiltern lines	89	165/0	March 1992
Thames lines	91	165/1	Summer 1992
Kent link	400	465	Spring 1993
Waterloo and City	20	482	Late 1992
Kent link	86	466	Spring 1993
Thames express	63	166	Summer 1993
West of England (Waterloo-Exeter line)	63	159	Summer 1992

Rail Safety

21. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss safety.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has regular meetings with Sir Bob Reid, the British Rail chairman, to discuss a variety of railway issues. Safety remains the top priority for both the Government and British Rail.

Road Schemes

24. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had referring to environmental aspects of proposed road schemes.

Mr. Chope: I received many representations on various aspects of the roads programme.

London Underground

25. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Transport to discuss improvements to the underground network.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet the chairman of London Transport regularly to discuss a variety of issues, including improvements to the underground network. The increase in grant announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement means that the Underground will have the resources that it needs to provide London with a system described by the chairman as a "decently modern metro".

Road Traffic (East London)

27. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on traffic conditions at the intersection of the Mile End road—A11—and Cambridge Heath road in London E1.

Mr. Chope: Traffic conditions at the junction of the A11 and Cambridge Heath road are a matter for the highway authority, the London borough of Tower Hamlets. I understand that the police increased enforcement activities in the area while work was in progress to repair a gas main on the nearby A13.

London Regional Transport Grant

28. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the proposed increase in grant to London Regional Transport.

Mr. Freeman: The chairman of London Transport has welcomed the increased funding announced in the autumn statement.

Tube Stations (Refurbishment)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he expects London Underground Ltd. to invest in the refurbishment of the Elephant and Castle and Rotherhithe tube stations during *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Mr. Freeman: Following the recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer of a record £3·8 billion grant for London Transport over the next three years, London Underground Limited (LUL) is currently reassessing its future investment programme. Although this work is not yet complete, I understand from LUL that work on the £6 million refurbishment of Elephant and Castle is likely to restart in 1992-93.

I understand that LUL does not have any firm date for refurbishment works at Rotherhithe, but the station may be included in a general refurbishment programme which will benefit several stations over the next few years.

Rail Freight Services

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to improve British Rail freight services between Southampton and other major cities and ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a commercial matter for the British Railways Board. However, I understand that Railfreight Distribution is at present considering the potential for expansion at Southampton.

M271

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to extend the M271 direct into the Western docks area of Southampton; and what is the time scale.

Mr. Chope: My Department has no such proposals, and I am not aware of any by Hampshire county council.

M27

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to complete the transportation links between Dover/Folkestone to Devon using the existing M27; and what is the time scale.

Mr. Chope: The national roads programme includes 21 schemes for improvements to sections of the A20, A259 and A27 between Dover and the M27 motorway, and another 16 schemes for sections of the A31, A35 and A30 westwards from the M27 to Exeter, collectively valued at some £438 million at November 1987 prices. Some of these are now under construction and the others are at various stages of preparation. Subject to satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and continuing availability of funds, we would expect all to be completed by the end of the decade.

The needs of the trunk road network are kept under constant review, and it is possible that further schemes along the south coast route might be added to the programme from time to time.

M3

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate is now foreseen for the completion of the missing link of the M3 motorway.

Mr. Chope: The Compton to Bassett section of the M3 is due for completion by the end of the year. The final section of the M3 around Winchester is programmed for completion by the end of 1994. This will complete the motorway route from London to Southampton.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what period a class I certificate for a heavy goods vehicle licence, DL 923, normally remains valid; if there are any circumstances in which this period can be extended; and whether he has any plans to seek to amend these arrangements.

Mr. Chope: Heavy goods vehicle test pass certificates (DLG23) were issued prior to 1 April of this year and are valid for five years. If drivers do not claim their full entitlement within the five year period the validity of the test pass certificate lapses.

From 1 April, drivers issued with large goods vehicle (LGV) or passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) test pass certificates must claim full entitlement within two years of passing the test.

The period is laid out in regulations and there is no current plan to change them.

Transport, London

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in tabular form the proportion of *(a)* inner London and *(b)* central London residents who used each of the following modes of transport for non-work trips for 1989 and 1990, respectively: *(a)* the Underground, *(b)* bus, *(c)* British Rail, *(d)* car, as driver, *(e)* car, as passenger, *(f)* cycle, *(g)* motor cycle and *(h)* pedestrian, respectively.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures requested are not available. Data are being collected for 1991 as part of the London area transport survey and results will be available in 1993.

Harbours Act 1964

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the harbours covered by the Harbours Act 1964 together with the name and address of the harbour authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are several hundred harbours as defined in section 57 of the 1964 Act. I am sending the hon. Lady a list.

Driving Licences

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving licences were renewed by drivers over the age of 70 years during 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: A total of 618,235 licences were renewed by drivers over the age of 70 years during 1990-91.

British Rail Staff

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were employed by British Rail in 1979 and in 1990.

Mr. Freeman: British rail had 134,361 employees at 31 March 1990. The figure at 31 December 1979 was 244,084.

Rights of Way

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the footpaths and bridleways through harbours which have been closed in the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Apart from applications (of which no central information is kept) from harbour authorities to the local highway authority for footpath or bridleway closures under the Highways Act 1980 and references in private Acts, provision has been made in two recent harbour revision orders, those for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in 1984 and for Blyth in 1989, for the stopping up of specific public rights of way and the provision of alternative public footpaths.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will require all details of footpaths and bridleways through trust ports to be stated in the objectives of the sales.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Objectives of sale agreed between individual ports authorities and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State represent criteria which the authority will take into account when assessing competing bids for the port. It would be inappropriate for them to incorporate details of footpaths and bridleways through the port. The same procedures for the extinguishment of footpaths and bridleways will continue to apply following privatisation as before it.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there is any requirement for a harbour authority to maintain for public inspection a map of footpaths and bridleways in the area of the harbour.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. It is the responsibility of the surveying authority (usually the county highway authority) to provide information about all public footpaths and bridleways in its area.

Road Casualties

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what percentage the number and the rate of each category of fatal and serious road casualties has changed since the target was set of reducing casualties by one third by the year 2000.

Mr. Chope: The Government target of reducing casualties by one third by the year 2000 was set in 1987, using the average annual number of casualties in the years from 1981 to 1985 as a baseline. The requested information is as follows:

Fatal and serious casualties in road injury accidents: Great Britain

	Casualties		*Percentage change*
	1981-85 average	*Year to June 1991*[1]	*1981-85 to 1991*
Fatal	5,598	4,655	−16·8
Serious	74,532	55,528	−25·5
	Casualty rate per 100 million vehicle kilometres		
Fatal	1·9	1·1	−39·4
Serious	25·0	13·6	−45·7
Traffic:[2] (hundred million vehicle Kilometres)	2,983	4,092	37·2

[1]Casualty and traffic data for 1991 are provisional.
[2]Source for traffic data: "Traffic in Great Britain 2nd Quarter 1991" Department of Transport Statistics Bulletin (91)7.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the national economic costs of traffic congestion.

Mr. Chope: We are taking a wide range of measures to deal with congestion, including substantial investment in public transport, roads and traffic management. There is no precise estimate of the total costs of congestion, but the cost is some billions of pounds each year.

Road Building and Maintenance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the money raised from motor taxation is spent on road building and maintenance; and what comparable information he has for Germany, the USA and Japan, respectively.

Mr. Chope: For 1991-92, the amount spent on building, maintaining and policing roads in the United Kingdom will be approximately 40 per cent. of motoring taxation revenue. Comparable information for Germany, the USA and Japan is not readily available.

A12

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the traffic flows along the A12 between *(a)* the M25 junction and Margaretting, *(b)* Boreham and Hatfield Peverel, *(c)* Feering and Marks Tey, *(d)* Marks Tey and Stanway and *(e)* at Four Sisters in 1989, 1990 and 1991, respectively.

Mr. Chope: Average daily traffic flows on the A12 were as follows:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
M25-Margaretting	62,000	63,000	67,000
Boreham-Hatfield Peverel	62,000	65,000	69,000
Feering-Marks Tey	53,000	52,000	54,000
Marks Tey-Stanway	63,000	63,000	64,000
Four Sisters	32,000	32,000	34,000

Trust Ports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will amend the objectives of sale under the privatisation process of trust ports which include sites of special scientific interest in their boundaries to require a stated environment objective where one has not been included.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. There will be no change in the arrangements for the protection of an SSSI as a result of

the privatisation of a trust port. There is already a requirement on the local planning authority to consult the relevant conservation agency when dealing with a planning application for a development affecting an SSSI. Similar consultations are undertaken by bodies proposing developments which are permitted developments within the general development order.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what level of inspection will be adopted by his Department to ensure that the fitting of heavy goods vehicle speed limiters on existing vehicles by operators has been carried out correctly;

(2) if he will set out the procedures to be adopted by heavy goods vehicle operators when the fitting of speed-limiting devices on existing vehicles becomes obligatory.

Mr. Chope: All new HGVs over 7·5 tonnes maximum gross weight will have to be fitted with speed limiters as from 1 August 1992. It is intended that compliance with the requirement should be checked when vehicles are type-approved, and at subsequent annual roadworthiness tests.

Regulations covering existing vehicles will be made shortly. They will require limiters to be fitted to the more recently registered of the biggest and heaviest HGVs already in service. Compliance with this requirement will be checked at annual roadworthiness tests.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure the wearing of seatbelts by passengers in heavy goods vehicles and vans.

Mr. Chope: Passengers travelling in the specified passenger seat are required to use a seat belt where one is fitted. Responsibility for enforcing the law rests with the police. We take every opportunity to stress the benefits of using belts, and of fitting them in vehicles which do not already have them.

Swale Crossing

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the strategy and timetable for the planning and construction of a second crossing of the Swale to the Isle of Sheppey.

Mr. Chope: The proposed A249 Iwade-Queenborough scheme will include a second crossing of the Swale. Investigation of options is in hand and the next step will be public consultation early in 1993. Thereafter, the programme will depend on public reaction and the time needed to complete the detailed design and statutory procedures.

A1M (Compensation)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the case for compensation for those homes close to the A1M in Hertfordshire to be compensated by central Government funds for extra noise and air pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. Compensation is already provided for in existing legislation: both for those from whom land is required for road schemes; and for those from whom no land is taken but whose properties depreciate in value because of such factors as noise, fumes and smoke arising as a direct result of the use of a new or altered highway.

Vehicle Distancing

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made to prevent vehicles driving too close to vehicles in front.

Mr. Chope: The Department has been conducting an experiment with chevron markings on the M1, to determine whether such markings are effective in reducing the amount of close following. The results of the experiment will be published shortly.

British Rail

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table listing the current and forecast levels of public service obligation grant and external financing limit for British Rail, and the outturn figures since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested for public service obligation grant and external financing limits for British Rail since 1975 and current forecasts to 1994-95 is as follows:

PSO grant and EFL 1975-76 to 1994-95

£ million

	PSO[1]		*EFL*	
	Cash	*1991-92 prices*	*Cash*	*1991-92 prices*
[2]1975-76	298	1,157	—	—
1976-77	299	1,022	421	1,439
1977-78	328	987	454	1,365
1978-79	389	1,055	574	1,559
1979-80	485	1,128	715	1,662
1980-81	576	1,132	790	1,552
1981-82	749	1,342	960	1,720
1982-83	817	1,367	848	1,418
1983-84	854	1,365	811	1,296
[3]1984-85	1,066	1,623	1,045	1,591
1985-86	820	1,183	910	1,313
1986-87	690	964	777	1,085
1987-88	761	1,008	591	783
1988-89	534	660	375	464
1989-90	499	579	673	781
1990-91	600	642	1,016	1,087
[4]1991-92	900	900	1,522	1,522
[5]1992-93	—	—	2,041	1,953
[5]1993-94	—	—	1,361	1,255
[5]1994-95	—	—	975	873

[1] The 1975-83 figures for PSO grant are for the calendar year.
[2] 1976-77 was the first year when an EFL was set.
[3] This was a 15-month accounting period for PSO grant. The 12 month equivalent is £853 million (1991-92 prices £1,298 million).
[4] Forecast.
[5] External finance figures are from Autumn Statement. PSO forecasts for grant are not yet available for 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Iwade Bypass

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a decision on the A249, Iwade bypass.

Mr. Chope: As soon as possible.

Car Telephones

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions have taken place in the last two years for driving with a hand-held car telephone; what steps he is taking to prevent such driving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: There are no separate statistics available on the number of prosecutions arising from the use of hand held car telephones. It is not a specific offence to use a car telephone whilst driving. Prosecution would result where the use of such a device leads a driver to drive without due care or without exercising proper control. Advice on the use of car telephones is given in a variety of publications including the highway code.

European Commission

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the article 169 letter he received in mid-October from the European Commission, in respect of EC directive 85/337/EEC.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 November 1991]:* No. It is an accepted convention that correspondence between the Government and the Commission is confidential.

River Itchen (Bridge)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has now invited tenders for bridge works over the River Itchen as part of the M3 Bar End-Compton.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* Tenders have been invited for bridge works in advance of the main M3 Bar End Compton contract, but these do not include a bridge over the River Itchen.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the advance works prior to the letting of a contract for bridge works over the River Itchen require an archaeological dig or any other work liable to damage the River Itchen watermeadows site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The advance works will affect a small corner of the Itchen Valley water meadows site of special scientific interest (SSSI). Ecological and archaeological work will be carried out in the affected area of the SSSI before any construction starts on that part of the site.

Environmental Assessments

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the correspondence between himself and the European Commission on *(a)* M3 motorway, reference P/1324/90 dated 26 March 1990 and 23 May 1991, *(b)* the Hackney Wick to M11 link road, dated 21 June 1990 and 14 August 1990 and *(c)* the A406 east London river crossing dated 24 October 1989 and 22 December 1989, with copies of any subsequent correspondence in respect of each.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* No. It is an accepted convention that correspondence between the Government and the Commission is confidential.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give a breakdown of the costs to his Department of preparing environment assessments in accordance with the EC directives;

(2) if he will list those private consultants selected by his Department to carry out environmental assessments in accordance with the EC directive and to which particular assessment they were attached;

(3) if he will list the schemes for which his Department has prepared an environmental statement as required under the EC directive, with full details of the costs of the preparation of these statements; and which have been prepared, *(a)* by his staff within the Department of Transport and *(b)* by outside consultants.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* Consultants are appointed to undertake the preparation and supervision of trunk road schemes under the direction of the Department of Tranport's staff. The consultants are responsible for the full range of duties associated with each commission, including an environmental assessment. The preparation of the environmental assessment, including the environmental statement, is not costed separately. Attached is a list of schemes for which an environmental statement in accordance with the EC directive 85/337 as applied by section 105A of the Highway Act 1980 has been published, together with the name of the consultants appointed to carry out the work:

Scheme	*Consultant(s)*
A1 Alconbury to Peterborough	W. S. Atkins Planning Consultants (main agent authority for scheme: Cambridge County Council)
A5 Little Brickhill Bypass	Kennedy Henderson Ltd.
A6 Clapham Bypass	Acer assisted by Acer Environmental and Ash Landscape Architects
A10 Wadesmill High Cross and Colliers End Bypass	Mott MacDonald
A11 Roudham Heath to Attleborough	G. Maunsell and Partners, assisted by the Landscape Partnership and Alconbury Environmental Consultants
A11 Besthorpe Wymondham	Norfolk County Council
A11 Four Wentways to Newmarket	Cambridgeshire County Council
A41 Aston Clinton Bypass	Buckinghamshire County Council

Scheme	Consultant(s)
A47 Walpole Highway to Tilney High End	Stirling Maynard and Partners assisted by Landscape Design Associates
A47 East Dereham to North Tuddenham	Kennedy Henderson Ltd.
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass (Keswick section and Trowse Newton)	Trowse Newton—Norfolk County Council; Keswick section—G. Maunsell and Partners
A140 Scole Bypass	Trevor Crocker and Partners (now DVH—Burrow Crocker)
A428 Bedford Southern Bypass	Brian Colquhoun and Partners assisted by Landscape Partnership
M1–A1 Link (Re-alignment of Naseby—Sibertoft Supplementary Order)	Brian Colquhoun and Partners assisted by Percy Thomas Partnership
M25 Motorway: Junctions 15–16 widening from dual 2–4 lanes	Sir William Halcrow and Partners assisted by Halcrow Fox and Wyn Thomas and Partners
M40 Motorway widening: Junctions 4–5 Buckinghamshire	Sir William Halcrow and Partners assisted by Halcrow Fox and Wyn Thomas and Partners
A6 Great Glen Bypass	Bingham Cotterell
A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass	Northants County Council assisted by Faulkes Perry and Rech Landscape Consultants
A16 Spalding to Sutterton improvement	Mott MacDonald (was Husbands)
A17 Leadenham Bypass	Trevor Crocker
A43 Silverstone Bypass	Northants County Council assisted by Adams Loxton Landscape Consultants
A46 Leicester Western Bypass	Travers Morgan
A564 Stoke–Derby link Derby Southern Bypass	Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners
A564 Foston Hatton Hilton	Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners
A13/A117 junction improvement	Acer assisted by Chris Blandford Associates
A13 West of Heathway—Wennington—Mar Dyke	Acer Freeman Fox Ltd. and W. S. Atkins Consultants Ltd. (joint main consultants)
A406 ELRC A13–A2016 design changes	Sir William Halcrow and Partners assisted by Halcrow Fox Associates
A406 Gunnersbury Avenue improvement	Howard Humphries and Partners
A406 Golders Green Road/Brent Street junction improvement	Gifford Graham and Partners
A406 Bounds Green to Green Lanes improvement	G. Maunsell and Partners
M1 junction 1 improvement	W. S. Atkins and Partners
M1 widening: Junction 9 northbound	Hertfordshire County Council
M5 motorway widening Warndon—Strensham junctions 6–8	Howard Humphries and Partners
A167 Durham Western Bypass	Roughton and Partners assisted by A. Walker and Partners
A590 Dalton-in-Furness Bypass	Babtie Shaw and Morton assisted by Gillespies
A66 Stainmore to Banksgate	Cumbria County Council
A500 Basford/Hough/Shavington	Veryard and Partners
M56 widening junctions 4–6	L. G. Mouchel and Partners
M6 motorway widening between junctions 20 and 21A	Pell Frischmann
M6 widening and improvements junctions 30 to 32	Rendel Palmer and Tritton
M62 widening junctions 14–17	G. Maunsell and Partners

Scheme	Consultant(s)
M62 widening junctions 17–18	G. Maunsell and Partners
M65 motorway Bamber Bridge—Whitebirk section (Blackburn Southern Bypass)	Howard Humphries and Partners
M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton—Middleton (A576–M62)	L. G. Mouchel and Partners
M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton—Middleton (M67–A576)	L. G. Mouchel and Partners
A3 Milford Bypass	W. S. Atkins and Partners
A23 Pease Pottage–Handcross	Acer
A27 Crossbush Bypass	West Sussex County Council
A27 Patching junction improvement	Peter Fraenkel and Partners assisted by Chris Blandford Associates
A27 Westhampnett Bypass	Gifford Graham and Partners
A34 Newbury Bypass—Andover Road junction	Mott MacDonald
A249 Iwade Bypass	Kent County Council
A249 M2—Bobbing improvement	L. G. Mouchel and Partners assisted by David Huskisson Associates
A249 Brielle Way	Kent County Council
A259 Brookland Diversion	Kent County Council
M20 improvement junctions 5–8 (Maidstone Bypass)	Travers Morgan
A30 Okehampton—Launceston improvement	Devon County Council
A30 Shallowater Hill improvement	Cornwall County Council assisted by Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd.
A30/A39 Indian Queens, Fraddon and St. Columb Road Bypasses	Cornwall County Council assisted by Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd.
A31 Ashley Heath Grade separated junction	Dorset County Council
A35 Tolpuddle Puddletown	Frank Graham Consulting Engineers Ltd. assisted by Cooper Partnership and Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd.
A39 Wadebridge Bypass	Cornwall County Council
A417 Brockworth Bypass	Frank Graham Consulting Engineers Ltd. assisted by Cooper Partnership and Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd. and Gloucester County Council
A419 Latton Bypass	Frank Graham Consulting Engineers Ltd. assisted by Cooper Partnership and Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd. and Cotswold Archeological Trust
Batheaston/Swainswick Bypass A36 link	Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners assisted by Derek Lovejoy and Partners and Avon County Council
M5 junction 18 improvement and Avonmouth Relief Road	Second Severn Crossing Group
Second Severn Crossing and approach roads	Second Severn Crossing Group assisted by Environmental Advisory Unit (Liverpool University) Ltd.
A5 Trunk Road Fazeley/Two Gates/ Wilnecote Bypass	Staffordshire County Council assisted by R. P. S. Clouston and Dr. Jeff Lewis
A49 Onibury—Stokesay improvement	Shropshire County Council assisted by Simon Waldering Associates
A49/A465 Hereford Bypass	John Burrow and Partners (now DVH Burrow—Crocker Consulting)
A50 Blythe Bridge—Queensway Stoke on Trent	Staffordshire County Council and Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners assisted by Derek Latham and Co.; R. P. S. Clouston; Scotts Haighton; Accoustical Investigation Research Organisation Ltd.

Scheme	Consultant(s)
A435 Norton Lenchwick Bypass	Dobbie and Partners (now Babtie Dobbie)
A435 Studley Bypass	Dobbie and Partners (now Babtie Dobbie)
A1(M) Walshford to Dishforth	Bullen and Partners
A63 Selby Bypass	North Yorkshire County Council and Anthony Walker and Partners
A65 Manor Park Improvement	City of Bradford
A65 Gargrave Bypass	Babtie Shaw and Morton
A65 Hellifield and Long Preston Bypass	Pell Frischmann
A65/A660 Burley-in-Wharfedale Bypass	City of Bradford
A650 Airedale route section 3 Crossflats —Cottingley Bar	Babtie Shaw and Morton

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Room Bookings

45. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what changes he proposes in the arrangements for hon. Members to book rooms in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no such proposals.

European Standing Committees

46. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement concerning the modus operandi of European Standing Committee A and B.

Mr. MacGregor: Experience so far shows that the two European Standing Committees are working well and have made a real contribution to the improved scrutiny of European legislation. I am currently seeking views from the Select Committee on Procedure as part of a first stage review of the new scrutiny arrangements and will consider carefully any recommendations which the Committee might make.

Parliamentary Hours

47. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he is now in a position to bring forward proposals to reduce the number of late sitting hours in the House of Commons.

Mr. MacGregor: This is one of the issues that the Select Committee on Sittings of the House is considering, and we await its recommendations.

One recent improvement has been that, since they were set up in January, the European Standing Committees have made a significant contribution to reducing the burden of late night debates on the Floor. Some 20 or so of their debates would probably have been held on the Floor after 10 pm under the previous arrangements.

Disabled People (Access)

48. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what further action he is taking to improve access to all parts of the Palace of Westminster for people with disabilities.

Mr. MacGregor: I commissioned consultants earlier in the year to look at means of improving access to the main public areas. Their initial report has been examined and further advice is now being sought.

Register of Members' Interests

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will initiate a proposal to require hon. Members to declare the amounts of remuneration they received from outside directorships, consultations and all other payments made for outside work in the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. MacGregor: No.

DEFENCE

Diving Forces

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the risk of mining or sabotage in or around British ports by terrorists.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The assessment of this type of threat from terrorists is not the responsibility of the MOD.

Service Personnel (Deaths)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the reasons why certain documents, including boards of inquiry reports relating to deaths of service personnel, should remain confidential to his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A board of inquiry aims to establish the facts of an incident and make recommendations to prevent a recurrence. It can help witnesses to speak freely and frankly if their evidence is treated confidentially. Other documents may be confidential for a variety of reasons, such as national security or medical or commercial confidentiality. Where original documents cannot be released the Department makes every effort to provide information to the next of kin of service men in alternative forms.

Coral Sea Battle

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Navy vessels are due to take part in the battle of the Coral sea celebrations in April/May 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No participation by RN ships in the commemoration is planned.

Glen Parva Barracks

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be putting into effect plans to centralise army pay and records at Glen Parva barracks, South Wigston.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We currently have no plans to centralise Army pay and records at Glen Parva barracks, South Wigston.

Exercise Starfish

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Navy vessels and in which years have taken part in exercises called Starfish.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HM ships regularly take part in the naval exercise STARFISH which is undertaken by member countries under the five power defence arrangements. Ships involved since 1981 are as follows:

Year	*Ship(s)*
1981	Wasperton
	Monkton
1982	Ajax
	Beachampton
	Wolverton
1983	Avenger
	Wasperton
	Monkton
1984	Falmouth
	Monkton
	Wolverton
1985	Plover
	Starling
1986	Amazon
	Beaver
	Starling
	Swallow
1987	Plover
	Starling
1988	Sirius
	Peacock
1989	Brave
1990	Battleaxe
	Plover
1991	Manchester
	Peacock

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Navy vessels are due to take part in Exercise Starfish 92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is planned that the Royal Navy will take part in Exercise Starfish 92, but details of which ships will be involved are still under consideration.

Dounreay

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long the prototype fast breeder reactor at Dounreay has been supplying electricity to HMS Vulcan; and at what cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1957, when the MOD Vulcan facility was established, it has obtained its electricity from the Scottish Hydroboard via the adjacent Atomic Energy Authority (Technology) establishment at Dounreay. The power consumed by Vulcan is metered and paid for at commercial rates.

Female Sailors

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total added cost of fitting out ships of the Royal Navy to cater for female crew.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of work done to date to provide accommodation and associated facilities on HM ships for female crew is £1·6 million.

New Zealand

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Navy is currently prepared to send ships to visit New Zealand.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans for Royal Navy ships to visit New Zealand in the immediate future.

Navy (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans in respect of the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Royal Navy surface ships.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Steps are being taken to remove tactical nuclear weapons from Royal Navy ships in accordance with the Government's new policy that such weapons will no longer be carried at sea in normal circumstances.

Staff Cars

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers are based in each auditing district; and how many staff cars are provided in each district.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested, but the numbers of staff cars and service officers based in the United Kingdom are as follows:

	Officers	*Staff cars*
RN	7,142	551
Army	10,652	1,719
RAF	12,880	1,095

The totals of cars include those held in pools which are available for use by all ranks, service and civilian, for travel on official business where this is the most cost effective option.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Department of Energy about contamination resulting from the testing of United Kingdom nuclear weapons in Nevada.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have regular discussions with the United States authorities on all aspects of United Kingdom nuclear tests carried out at the Nevada test site.

Storage Depots

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether arrangements have been made for environmental clean-up at the naval fuel storage depot at *(a)* Invergordon and *(b)* Finnart before their closure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is normal practice for the existence, nature and extent of any contamination to be identified by the MOD prior to the disposal of land. Any decontamination required would either be undertaken by the Department or by the acquiring authority, dependent upon the circumstances of the land disposal.

"Options for Change"

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to review the arrangements for financial assistance for serving officers who are required to change uniforms as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals;

(2) what contribution will be made to officers of each rank who are required to change regiments as a result of the imlementation of the "Options for Change" proposals in order to enable them to meet the cost of the new uniforms which they will require.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The levels of uniform grants payable on the amalgamation of regiments are currently under consideration. In general officers are expected to meet the costs of maintaining and replacing their uniforms, but those involved in amalgamations will receive a grant to assist with the cost of essential changes in uniform when such new items are not usually provided as a free issue. It is our intention to keep changes in uniform to the minimum, and where possible to allow officers to wear out their existing uniforms.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to review the redundancy arrangements for all serving personnel who are made redundant as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, although we are reviewing arrangements for housing and resettlement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many junior non-commissioned officers and other ranks with under 12 years' service he expects to be made redundant as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals;

(2) if he will give a breakdown by length of service of the average amount of redundancy payment which will be made to junior non-commissioned officers and other ranks made redundant as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals before the completion of 12 years' service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not expect that anyone who has served in the Army for less than 12 years will be made redundant in 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation he undertook prior to the setting of the limits upon financial assistance which may be made available to serving officers who are required to change uniforms as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No limits have yet been set on the financial assistance which may be made available to officers required to change uniforms as a result of the implementation of "Options for Change". The new uniforms have yet to be agreed, but once this has been done appropriate allowances will be calculated.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the current average cost of the uniforms of officers of each rank in each of the regiments which will exist after the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The uniforms of many of the regiments which will exist after the implementation of "Options for Change" have yet to be determined. As a guide, however, current allowances payable to newly commissioned officers to meet the costs of those uniform items which they are required to purchase from military tailors are set out in the table. These allowances are based on average prices charged by military tailors and their current levels reflect prices notified to the Ministry of Defence in January 1991.

Officers initial outfit allowance

	£
Male officers	
Dismounted officers and career officers except as below	1,716
Officers of the Household Cavalry dismounted order	2,617
Officers of the Foot Guards	2,558
Officers of Lowland Regiments	1,901
Officers of Highland Regiments	2,174
Officers of The Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Irish Rangers, Parachute Regiment, Army Air Corps, SAS and Intelligence Corps	1,679
Officers of the Royal Army Chaplains Department (includes rate for special scarf)	1,829
Female officers	
Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (Nursing Officers)	1,628
Non-nursing Officers	1,416
Officers of The Women's Royal Army Corps	1,259
Female direct entry to the Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Army Dental Corps	2,075
Army Legal Corps	2,453
Royal Army Veterinary Corps	1,985

Notes:

1. These figures do not include officers on probation or Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Army Dental Corps and Royal Army Veterinary Corps Cadets.
2. Some officers receive an extra £99 for a non-standard pattern Sam Browne/Cross Belt.
3. Officers of the Household Cavalry and King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery on full Mounted Duty receive a further grant of £2,020 on first posting to that duty.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the redundancy provisions for junior non-commissioned officers and other ranks made redundant as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have received a number of representations about our general plans for redundancies.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving officers of each rank will change regiment as a result of the implementation of the "Options for Change" proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It will be some time before this information is available.

Korea (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the People's Republic of China about assistance by that country to the nuclear weapons programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rabbits

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the legitimate methods available for controlling the rabbit population.

Mr. Gummer: In order to prevent or reduce the damage caused by rabbits a wide range of legitimate control methods are available. These include shooting, gassing, trapping and the use of rabbit-proof fencing. My Department also funds a substantial programme of research into ensuring that controls are available which are not only effective but humane and environmentally safe.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the increase in myxomatosis in the rabbit population in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no information about the prevalence of myxomatosis in the rabbit population. However, the increasing rabbit population may have led to a greater number of individual rabbits being seen to be affected by the disease, without there necessarily being an increase in the percentage of the population affected.

Milk

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the future of producer-processors in the Pennine villages whose livelihood comes from selling milk and milk products to their local communities;

(2) what is his assessment of the impact on communities of the differential levy on producer-processors;

(3) if he will make a statement on the impact of the levy from the milk marketing board on direct sellers of milk and milk products.

Mr. Curry: Under Community law the milk marketing boards have the exclusive right to purchase from producers in their area milk produced and marketed without processing. Producers may, however, with the agreement of the board, sell their milk direct to consumers or retail outlets subject to the payment of a levy.

The Milk Marketing Board's entitlement to levy producers has been the subject of legal proceedings in which the European Court of Justice confirmed that the board's exclusive rights extended to direct sellers. The High Court subsequently found that the size of the levies was lawful. This judgment is subject to appeal. Change to the present milk marketing arrangements is essential to enable producers and processors to operate more flexibly to meet the needs of consumers and to give full scope to their entrepreneurial talents. The Government are therefore looking to the England and Wales Milk Marketing Board to advance rapidly in discussion with the Dairy Trade Federation its proposals for change to voluntary co-operative status. The process of change must however be orderly. Until new arrangements are introduced the proper and reliable operation of the milk marketing scheme must be sustained and producers will have to operate within its rules.

Set-aside

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider introducing a system of nitrogen set-aside, to replace the present arrangement of land set-aside.

Mr. Curry: Limiting nitrogen use is not a cost-effective or practical way of addressing the problem of surplus production under the common agricultural policy. However, rules concerning the quantity and timing of nitrogen fertiliser applications will in due course be introduced in nitrate vulnerable zones, in line with the provisions of the nitrate directive agreed at the Environment Council on 14 June.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for ending the compulsory dipping of sheep.

Mr. Curry: The compulsory dipping period for 1991 ended at the beginning of this month. Arrangements for 1992 will be considered when the results of this year's dip are available.

Slaughterhouses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many man years have been used by his staff involved in listing all abattoirs to advise on hygiene and welfare standards in exporting premises for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Local authorities are responsible for enforcing legislation on hygiene and welfare at abattoirs. Officers of my Department visit all abattoirs to advise on hygiene and welfare standards and, in relation to export-approved red meat premises, to ensure that Community requirements are observed. The manpower involved amounted to 60 man years in 1990-91; the figure for 1991-92 is expected to show an increase over this figure to reflect increased demand for advice on single market requirements.

SCOTLAND

Dogs (Poisoning)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about recent incidents of poisoning of dogs caused by agricultural pesticides in East Lothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 12 November The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department (SOAFD) learnt that a number of pet dogs had died or been taken ill apparently after eating blue coloured pellets in Niddrie walkway, Muckletts road, Musselburgh. The total number of reported deaths is seven.

Analysis of the stomach contents of three of the dogs carried out by the Department's scientific staff indicates that they died from metaldehyde poisoning.

The police cordoned off the main extrances to the walkway and warning notices were posted by the environmental health department of East Lothian District Council. SOAFD also issued a notice of requirement under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 directing the farmer concerned to search for and remove molluscicides from the area and its adjacent boundaries.

A full report on the incident leading to the deaths of the dogs is being prepared and will be submitted shortly to the procurator fiscal.

Higher Education

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimate of the funding needed to repair, and bring up to 1990 standards, the fabric and building services of the further education and central institutions in Scotland; and how many of them are now regarded as being in a poor state of repair.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The condition of buildings in the further education sector is a matter for the relevant education authority and in the grant-aided colleges for the board of governors of the college concerned. The Scottish Office Education Department in its allocation of capital expenditure resource to the grant-aided colleges gives priority to proposals aimed at maintaining the physical condition of buildings and services.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy towards mergers between higher education institutions in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Universities Funding Council will publish later today a report to me by its Scottish Committee entitled "Criteria for Assessing Merger Proposals from Institutions of Higher Education". In my foreword to the report, I have said:

"I am most grateful to Professor Shaw, members of his sub-group and the Scottish Committee of the Universities Funding Council for the very thorough and careful consideration that has gone into their report. I also appreciate the contribution made by the many contributors to the consultation exercise carried out by the Committee.

The report is a valuable and timely landmark in a period of very rapid change in higher education resulting from publication of our White Paper in the Spring and the introduction of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill earlier this month. In our White Paper, we set out our commitment to continued expansion of higher education to meet the growing demand from all those able to benefit from it. In recent years Scottish higher education institutions have responded very well to the changing demands of students for more courses, delivered in different ways to suit the more diverse nature of the modern student population. In doing so, they have achieved exactly the sort of efficient expansion to which our White Paper referred. There is still scope for yet more such innovation in teaching and administration, and collaboration or even closer association up to and including full institutional merger has a contribution to make to this process.

This report provides an excellent analysis of the factors which higher education managements, staff and students should take into account when considering mergers. It provides what I am certain will become a key reference for all those committed to enhancing and developing further the achievements of Scottish higher education. I commend this report to all those involved who share our commitment to meeting the needs of future generations of students.

I would therefore expect institutions to assess any proposals for merger against the principles and criteria set out in the report; and in considering such proposals I shall look for evidence that this has been done."

A copy of the report will be placed in the House Library.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of students following degree courses in universities and central institutions in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: The number of students following first degree courses in universities and central institutions is given in the table:

Number of students

Year	*Universities*		*Central Institutions*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1986-87	40,541	2,285	14,675	717
1987-88	41,579	2,194	15,278	909
1988-89	42,055	1,814	16,516	1,180
1989-90	44,094	1,655	17,936	1,792
1990-91	46,417	1,277	20,147	2,235

New Legislation

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the proposals in the citizens charter and in the documents the parents charter, the patients charter and the courts charter published by his Department for which new legislation will be required.

Mr. Lang: The following proposals which fall within my responsibilities will require new legislation:

Citizens Charter

(a) to ensure fair competition and extend compulsory competitive tendering to a wider range of local authority services;

(b) to enable the Commission for Local Authority Accounts to require local authorities to publish common standards of performance; and

(c) to require local authorities to consider and respond publicly to auditors reports.

Provisions covering these three proposals are included in the Local Government Bill which was introduced to Parliament on 4 November.

Parents Charter

(i) to publish comparable information about schools in a standard format relating to public examination results, truancy rates, the destination of school leavers and school running costs; and

(ii) to provide for the new pupil report card.

Provisions covering these proposals are included in the Education (Schools) Bill which was introduced to Parliament on 6 November.

School Meals Census

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January 1991; and what were the corresponding 1990 results.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table. The number of pupils taking school meals has continued to increase, despite a fall in the number of pupils present on census day. Almost half the pupils present on census day took school meals with an estimated 17 per cent. bringing their own food to school. Free meals formed 31 per cent. of the total meals provided. Cafeteria style

meals remain more popular than two course fixed meals although the uptake dropped slightly from 69 per cent. to 67 per cent. of the meals taken.

Education authority schools (including nursery and special schools)

	1991 Number	1991 As percentage of pupils present	1990 Number	1990 As percentage of pupils present
Pupils present on census day	698,554		704,357	
Pupils taking school meals				
—on payment	230,378	33·0	230,410	32·7
—free	101,915	14·6	99,303	14·1
—total	332,293	47·6	329,713	46·8
Pupils bringing own food on school premises[1]	106,110	16·9	100,469	16·0

[1] Excluding Grampian.

A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as a percentage of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary and secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	Primary 1991 per cent.	Primary 1990 per cent.	Secondary 1991 per cent.	Secondary 1990 per cent.
Pupils taking school meals	52·9	52·7	44·2	42·2
Pupils bringing own food[1]	25·0	20·6	6·5	6·1

[1] Excluding Grampian.

Sixty seven per cent. of all meals are of cafeteria style.

	1991 Paid	1991 Free	1991 Total	1991 Percentage of pupils present	1990 Paid	1990 Free	1990 Total	1990 Percentage of pupils present
Pupils taking fixed meals	76,252	33,849	110,101	15·8	71,819	30,019	101,838	14·5
Pupils taking cafeteria meals	154,126	68,066	222,192	31·8	158,591	69,284	227,875	32·4

Recycling

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many outlets there are in Scotland which deal with the recycling of organic effluents for agricultural land.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Office is not aware of any industrial operations in Scotland, of a significant size, which recycle such effluents for agricultural use. However, the direct application of such effluents to land, for the purpose of fertilising or otherwise beneficially conditioning the land, is a common agricultural practice which might be considered to be a form of recycling.

Hip Replacements

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing the current waiting lists for hip replacements for each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on waiting lists for hip replacement surgery is not collected centrally, but arrangements are in hand to collect this in future in order to monitor the commitments of the patients charter.

Urban Programme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total of direct grants to voluntary organisations paid by his Department in the latest year for which figures are available together with other payments to voluntary organisations under the urban programme and through other Government agencies.

Mr. Lang: The latest figures available for the total of direct grants to voluntary organisations paid by the Scottish Office including the urban programme and agencies were announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22 March 1991 at columns 237-38.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of planned expenditure funded by his Department for the production, promotion and advertising of the four documents being published in Scotland in connection with the citizens charter.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure on the production, promotion and advertising of the four documents published in Scotland in connection with the citizens charter is estimated at £320,000.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what responsibility the citizens charter advisory panel chaired by Sir James Blyth has for the application of the citizens charter in Scotland; and if Scottish hon. Members will be appointed to that Committee.

Mr. Lang: The citizens charter advisory panel has been appointed by the Prime Minister to advise on the development and application of the citizens charter principles to public services throughout Great Britain. Two of the seven members are Scots. The panel members are appointed on the basis of their professional expertise rather than to represent particular sectional interests.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 November 1991

TRANSPORT

Kent Link

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been approved for re-equipment of the Kent link services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Approval has been given to the following investment in Kent link:

Project	*Cost £ million*
Initial build of 400 Class 465 Networker vehicles (to make 4-car trains)	297
86 Class 466 Networker vehicles (2-car version of Class 465)	67
A further 188 Class 465 vehicles	127
Infrastructure (including platform lengthening)	120
Total	611

The Government have just increased British Rail's external finance limit for next year by nearly £1 billion to a total of over £2 billion. It is for BR to allocate resources to specific schemes within its external finance limit: that limit is not hypothecated to particular projects.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety precautions will be installed on channel tunnel trains to deal with vehicle fires.

Mr. Freeman: The safety precautions required for Eurotunnel's shuttle trains are set out in the report on non-segregation of drivers and passengers from their vehicles, published by the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority in March 1990. The report is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to make a further statement on the channel tunnel or its associated transport infrastructure before the next meeting of the joint consultative committee in Kent.

Mr. Freeman: If any statement is made on matters of concern to my hon. Friend, I shall write to him.

Rail Line, Cowlairs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the railway inspectorate's provisional approval of the single line chord at Cowlairs, to which he referred in his answer of 7 November, *Official Report*, column *189*.

Mr. Freeman: I have made arrangements for a copy of Her Majesty's railway inspectorate's provisional approval to the single line chord at Cowlairs to be deposited in the Library.

Trains (Ages)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the average age of *(a)* engines and *(b)* passenger train units currently in service, excluding InterCity, by British Rail region.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available by British Rail region. The average ages by sector are as follows:

	Multiple units	*Locomotives and loco-hauled stock*
Regional railways	16	25
Network SouthEast	19	27

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has, or will be, represented during November and December.

Mr. Rifkind: Neither I nor my ministerial colleagues have attended any meetings during November. I expect to attend the meeting of the Transport Council to be held in Brussels on 16-17 December.

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of (i) the number of visits made during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business;

(2) if he will list (i) the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Many of my officials attend EC-related meetings outside the United Kingdom. These are very numerous and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Haulage

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he proposes any changes to the fees charged to United Kingdom hauliers for international road haulage permits in 1992.

Mr. Chope: I am glad to announce some further fee reductions following the successful negotiation of significant increases in the United Kingdom's bilateral and multilateral quota. This has resulted in greater income from permits without significant increases in costs.

Our success benefits British hauliers twice—first, from the more plentiful supply of permits and, secondly, from the reduction in fees.

The fees will be as follows, with the 1991 charges in brackets:

	£	£
Single journey permit	£2	(£2)
Multi journey permit for two or more journeys	£1 per journey	(£1)
Annual period permit	£20	(£40)
Three month period permit	£5	(£10)
Multilateral EC/ECMT 3 annual permit	£40	(£80)
Multilateral EC/ECMT 3 month permit	£10	(£20)
Community Removals (annual)	£5	(£25)
Multilateral EC 1 month permit	£5	(£7)
EC 1 month cabotage permit	£5	(£5)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the outcome of his Department's recent bilateral negotiations on road transport with the Soviet Union and its republics.

Mr. Chope: These negotiations resulted in agreement that road hauliers travelling between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and its republics will no longer need to carry permits as from 1 April 1992. We have also reached agreement with Portugal that road hauliers travelling between the United Kingdom and Portugal will no longer need to carry permits from 1 January 1992.

These follow my Department's success in February-March this year in negotiating the ending of permits between the United Kingdom and Hungary and the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia from 1 January 1992.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: Latest estimates are that about 24,000 calls to directory inquiries are made each year, representing approximately 1·5 calls for each member of staff annually.

Air Pollution

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to take to combat air pollution caused by road transport.

Mr. Chope *[pursuant to the answer, 22 November, Vol. 199, c. 236]:* On 1 October the EC Council of Ministers adopted an amending directive 91/542/EEC prescribing stricter limits on the same gaseous emissions from new diesel-engined trucks and buses over 3·5 tonnes. Limits on emissions of particulates are also set for the first time. There will be two stages, the first to take effect in 1992-93 and the second in 1995-96, with the potential for a third, starting in 1999. The 1992-93 stage substantially reduces the limit for emissions of NOx and establishes limits for particulate emissions. The 1995-96 stage goes further with NOx reduction, so that the limit will be less than half its present value, and reduces the particulate limit to a level of stringency similar to that to be applied in the United States from 1994.

Both directives set ambitious targets with a challenging but industrially realistic timetable, putting the United Kingdom and its EC partners on a course for substantial longer-term progress in improving the quality of air in our towns and cities.

Regulations will shortly be laid before Parliament introducing the directives into United Kingdom law.

The Government are also pressing the EC Commission to propose a directive to control CO^2 emissions from motor vehicles using a system of tradeable credits to ensure effective control of this important greenhouse gas.

On 1 November a new MOT emissions check came into effect. If motorists keep their engines in tune, less fuel is burnt and therefore fewer pollutants are emitted. It is expected that the check should improve fuel consumption and hence reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 4 per cent. averaged over the 16·5 million cars and light vans in the MOT scheme, with substantially larger benefits to carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions.

During 1992 the Government also plan to introduce an instrumented smoke check into the annual test procedure for large goods vehicles and buses.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of *(a)* the basic state retirement pension, *(b)* state earnings-related pension scheme, *(c)* occupational pensions and *(d)* personal pensions as a percentage of gross domestic product each year since 1979; and what estimates he makes, stating his assumptions, for 1995, 2005, 2015, 2025 and 2035.

Miss Widdecombe: The cost of basic state retirement pension and the state earnings-related pension scheme as a percentage of gross domestic product from 1978-79 to 1990-91 is given in the table.

Estimates of the cost of basic state retirement pension and SERPS are not available for the future years quoted in the question, but estimates for certain years up to 2050-51 are published in the report by the Government Actuary on the second quinquennial review under section 137 of the Social Security Act 1975, a copy of which is available in the Library.

The Government do not publish assumptions for money GDP for the future years quoted.

Comparable information on the cost to pension providers of occupational and personal pensions is not available.

	Basic RP Expenditure £ million	*Percentage of GDP*	*SERPS Expenditure £ million*	*Percentage of GDP*
1978-79	7,552	4·43	—	—
1979-80	8,815	4·30	1	0·0005
1980-81	10,518	4·50	8	0·003
1981-82	12,107	4·72	19	0·01
1982-83	13,509	4·82	40	0·01
1983-84	14,553	4·78	60	0·02
1984-85	15,181	4·66	87	0·03
1985-86	16,443	4·61	141	0·04
1986-87	17,560	4·58	219	0·06
1987-88	18,356	4·33	292	0·07
1988-89	18,857	4·00	380	0·08
1989-90	20,171	3·96	526	0·10
1990-91[1]	21,990	4·02	725	0·13

[1] Estimated expenditure.

Carers Charter

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to introduce a carers charter to ensure the mutual financial independence of carers and disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no such plans. However, by the end of the year the Benefits Agency plans to publish its own customer charter which will take account of the needs of all its customers. An independent income for carers is provided in the form of invalid care allowance—ICA. More carers are now able to benefit following recent extensions in the provision of attendance allowance, the introduction of a carer premium into the income-related benefits and increases in the ICA earnings limit, from £12 per week prior to April 1990, to £40 from April 1992.

Housing and Mortgage Statistics

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail the annual figures for *(a)* mortgage interest tax relief and *(b)* housing benefit for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and the projected figures for 1991-92, respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: The amounts of housing benefit paid to beneficiaries and the tax relief given on mortgage interest in the United Kingdom for the relevant years are shown in the table.

	Housing benefit [1]	*Mortgage interest relief £ billion*
1989-90	4·3	6·8
1990-91	[2]4·9	[3]7·7
1991-92	[4]5·4	[5]6·1

Notes:

[1] Excludes Rate Rebates and Community Charge Benefit. Includes Rent Rebates and Rent Allowances.

[2] Estimated outturn.

[3] Provisional figure.

[4] Planned expenditure.

[5] Estimated figure based on the assumption that current interest rates are unchanged for the rest of the year.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the working of the housing benefit direct payment procedure, particularly with regard to delays in payment and failure by recipients of benefit always to make rental payments; what changes are being considered to the guidance notes to local authorities; and what other measures are being considered.

Miss Widdecombe: Full statutory responsibility for the administration of the housing benefit scheme rests with local authorities, which are required to ensure that the system is working effectively and in accordance with the rules of the scheme. Regulations prescribe that claims should be processed within 14 days of receipt of all the necessary information, or as soon as possible thereafter. Where, through no fault of the applicant, a claim cannot be settled within 14 days, interim payments should be made.

An important principle underlying the social security reforms is that individuals should be encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own affairs. Housing benefit is, therefore, normally paid direct to private tenants in the form of a cash rent allowance to enable them to discharge their liability to their landlord. Nevertheless, regulations do give local authorities wide-ranging powers to pay benefit direct to a tenant's landlord, for example where rent arrears have accrued or where social or medical problems clearly indicate that help with budgeting is needed. A number of representations have been received about local authorities' use of those powers, and the Department therefore intends to issue further guidance on the relevant legislation to authorities in due course.

Disabled People and Carers

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what, in real terms, is the increase on expenditure on benefits for disabled people and carers since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Total planned expenditure on benefits for disabled people and carers for 1991-92 is £11,950 million —an increase of 152 per cent. in real terms over spending in 1978-79.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many computer management and consultancy contracts were awarded by his Department in 1991, excluding hardware and software purchases; if he will give the total value of these contracts; how many contracts were subject to competitive tender; and if he will give the value of these contracts.

Miss Widdecombe: Since January 1991 we have awarded 19 such contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases. The total value of the contracts is about £20 million. Eleven were let by competitive tender; the total value of these is about £13·5 million.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names of the companies shortlisted for each computer management and computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1991, excluding hardware and software purchases.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of companies shortlisted for computer management and consultancy contracts represents commercial-in-confidence information.

Care Homes

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the measures being taken to help those in residential care and nursing homes.

Miss Widdecombe: Special higher levels of income support are available to people in residential care and nursing homes towards the cost of their fees. On 21 October, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced proposals for substantial increases, from April 1992, to the limits which apply to people in such homes, including increases of £20 a week for two groups of people —the mentally handicapped and the very dependent elderly—and £15 to almost all the other limits.

From April 1993, new arrangements will be implemented as part of the Government's community care policy for the assessment and provision of care for such people. This will improve the effectiveness and targeting of the resources.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the powers available to inspectors at the Contributions Agency relating to entry of premises, seizure and inspection of documents; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The agency's inspectors have powers relating to entry of premises and inspection of documents to ensure that the Acts and regulations are complied with. The relevant legislation is contained in section 58 of the Social Security Act, 1986, and regulation 32 of the Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979 which is summarised as follows:—

Certified inspectors are empowered to:

(1) enter at all reasonable times any premises where persons are employed or from where any agency or business is being conducted.

(2) require information to be provided by individuals and inspect any records to ensure that the provisions of the Social Security and related Acts are being complied with.

The regulations require employers to produce wages sheets and other records relating to the calculation of payment of emoluments, and that such documents should be kept by employers for not less than three years after the end of the year to which they relate. The vast majority of inquiries carried out by the agency are completed in an effective and businesslike manner, without recourse to these powers which are normally used as a last resort.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fire Stations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are to *(a)* refurbish existing fire stations and *(b)* to build purpose-built fire stations in Northern Ireland; and what is the proposed start date for each project.

Mr. Needham: The Fire Authority for Northern Ireland's current works programme does not include any projects for refurbishing existing fire stations. It does, however, make provision for the following purpose-built fire stations:

Location	*Proposed start date 1992*
Glengormley	January
Crossmaglen	February
Carryduff	November

In addition the authority will be providing prefabricated buildings for new retained fire stations at Dromore, Co. Tyrone and Ballywalter, Co. Down. The proposed start dates for these are February 1992 and June 1992 respectively.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available.

Belfast Prison

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to identify the senior figure who will carry out an inquiry into prisoner management at Her Majesty's prison Belfast.

Mr. Brooke: I am glad to say that Viscount Colville of Culross, QC has agreed to undertake this important task, with the following terms of reference:

To review the operational policy in Belfast Prison for the management of paramilitary prisoners from opposing factions; and to make recommendations.

Lord Colville will begin work immediately and I expect to receive his report early in the new year.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it remains his policy that the agreed budgetary guidelines for the common agricultural policy must be observed; and if he will make it his policy to veto any proposals at the Council of Ministers which would lead to those guidelines being breached.

Mr. Curry: The Commission is legally bound to keep agricultural support expenditure within the guideline, the base level of which can be changed only by unanimity. The Government remain committed to ensuring that the cost of agricultural support is contained within the existing budgetary guidelines.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount in pounds spent on each agricultural product under the CAP in 1990.

Mr. Gummer: Expenditure on agricultural commodities under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guarantee section in 1990, is given in the table.

	£ million
Cereals	2,697
Rice	60
Sugar	986
Olive Oil	829
Oilseeds	2,468
Proteins	93
Textiles	412
Fruit and vegetables	890
Wine	529
Tobacco	875
Other arable products	60
Milk	3,518
Beef	2,011
Sheepmeat	1,031
Pigmeat	175
Eggs and poultry	127

Source: EAGGF Guarantee Report 1990

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Curry: This information is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Agricultural Support

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amounts in ecu spent on non-CAP agricultural support for each EC country for 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Gummer: The Government monitor, through their embassies in member states, the introduction of new state aids and modifications to existing aids, and draw any that seem to be of doubtful legality to the attention of the Commission. The Government do not keep comprehensive details of the non-CAP agricultural expenditure in other member states, since to do so would not be a cost-effective use of resources.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many disputed milk quota exceptional hardship claims were taken to judicial review following consideration by the diary produce tribunal for England and Wales; in how many of those claims the courts referred the cases back to the tribunal for reconsideration; what was the total litreage of quota at issue in these cases; and what was the actual additional litreage allocated to the producers concerned.

Mr. Curry: There have been eight judicial reviews of decisions of the dairy produce quotas tribunal relating to quota claims on the grounds of exceptional hardship, as defined in paragraph 17 of part II to schedule 2 of the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1984 and 1986. Of these, four claims were referred back to the tribunal for re-hearing. These re-hearings resulted in tribunal awards of quota totalling just over 1 million litres. Claimants were not required, under the provisions of the regulations, to state the litreage of quota which they considered to be at issue in that case. It is my understanding that none of the four had been awarded exceptional hardship quota in their original tribunal hearing, although two had been given primary quota awards which together totalled over 3 million litres.

Fisheries Council

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting on 28 October 1991.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply, 6 November 1991, c. 163-64.]:* I very much welcome the decision by the Japanese Government to ban large-scale high seas drift netting by the end of December 1992, with an interim step halving the use of such nets by the end of June 1992. This is a major step forward in protecting dolphins and other small cetaceans. It is particularly significant as it comes shortly after the European Community's own decision, for which we pressed hard, to stop the development of large-scale indiscriminate drift netting.

These decisions give clear notice to the world that the major fishing nations are not going to allow the development or expansion of such fisheries.

I am delighted at the news that the UN resolution calling for a moratorium on large-scale drift netting is having a clear effect. Britain continues to be determined to protect small cetaceans.

ENERGY

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department does not hold this information.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the Asylum Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since July we have received approximately 200 letters from hon. Members forwarding correspondence from their constituents and about 820 letters from members of the public. A large proportion of these have been pro forma letters from members of organisations such as Amnesty International, Charter '87, A Charter for Refugees, and the Asylum Rights Campaign. The majority of correspondents have expressed opposition to one or more aspects of the Government's proposals.

Metropolitan Police (Compensation Awards)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the public have received awards from the Metropolitan police following civil actions brought by them for assault, wrongful arrest, false imprisonment or malicious prosecution in each year since 1985, inclusive; and what has been the total amount of such awards in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not held in the form requested. However, I understand from the commissioner that the amounts paid by the Metropolitan police under awards made by the courts and out-of-court settlements arising from allegations of wrongful acts, including assault, wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution by Metropolitan police officers, and the number of plaintiffs who have received awards and settlements are as follows:

Year	*Awards made by the court* £	*Number of plaintiffs in receipt of awards*	*Out of court settlements* £	*Number of plaintiffs in receipt of settlements*
1985	13,949	8	193,588	58
1986	46,836	11	330,332	63
1987	11,233	6	82,486	48
1988	107,035	22	250,557	59
1989	252,904	30	266,850	51
1990	188,110	8	557,214	88
[1]1991	18,627	11	299,691	74

[1] (to 22 November).

Tamils

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number in each of the last five years of Sri Lankan Tamils deported from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available relates to all Sri Lankan citizens deported and is given in the table. No distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans.

Sri Lankan citizens removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process.

Year	Number
1986	3
1987	6
1988	8
1989	12
1990	4
[1]1991	3

[1] January to June.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of Sri Lankan Tamils seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; what number has been granted; and what number has been rejected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available relates to all Sri Lankan citizens and is given in the table. No distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom by citizens of Sri Lanka, and decisions[1].

	Applications[2]	Decisions[3]		
		Granted asylum	Granted exceptional leave	Refused asylum or exceptional leave
1986	1,274	5	1,489	5
1987	994	7	733	64
1988	402	6	226	52
[3]1989	1,785	10	840	30
[3]1990	3,325	10	455	10
[3,4]1991	2,410	10	630	15

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] Decisions in a particular year do not necessarily relate to applications in that year.
[3] Provisional figures, rounded to the nearest 5. Decisions figures for 1990 and January-June 1991 may understate because of delays in recording.
[4] January to June.

Terrorists

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Irish *(a)* men and *(b)* women serving prison sentences in the United Kingdom for terrorist activities have been transferred to prisons in Northern Ireland or Eire in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not possible to transfer prisoners from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland because the latter has not ratified the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons.

Information on the number of prisoners transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland is given in the table. Statistics are not collated on the basis of the prisoner's nationality, sex or offence. The transfer of prisoners from Scotland to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

1. Permanent transfers of prisoners from England and Wales to Northern Ireland

	Number Transferred
1985	3
1986	2
1987	3
1988	6
1989	15
1990	3
[1]1991	4
Total	36

[1] to 31 October.

2. Temporary transfers of prisoners from England and Wales to Northern Ireland

	Number Transferred
1985	1
1986	1
1987	2
1988	7
1989	2
1990	12
[1]1991	8
Total	33

[1] to 31 October.

Vehicle Security

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report on the progress of his talks with car manufacturers concerning the provision of security systems in cars; if he will make such provision compulsory in new vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: At a seminar on crime prevention chaired by the then Prime Minister in 1986, it was agreed that the British Standards Institution and the motor vehicle manufacturers should produce a performance based standard on car security. A five-part standard—BS AU209—was subsequently published, covering mechanical locking systems, in-car entertainment equipment, window etching, central power locking and deadlocking.

My right hon. Friend is engaged in a series of meetings with the motor vehicle manufacturers to encourage them to adopt these standards for all new cars. Many manufacturers have already made significant improvements in security, but there is still much more that can be done. My right hon. Friend and I will meet the manufacturers again on 11 December to discuss their progress.

It would be a breach of European Community law for the Government to introduce separate national legislation on vehicle security since this would constitute a technical barrier to trade with member states. It was, however, agreed at the seminar on crime prevention in 1986 that the Department of Transport would seek to have the British standard on vehicle security adopted as an EC directive. That Department, with the support of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, is continuing to take this matter forward in the motor vehicles working group of the European Commission; its efforts have my full support and that of my right hon. Friend.

Italian Prisoners

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Italian citizens are currently serving sentences in United Kingdom prisons; how many such citizens have been permitted to return home to serve their sentences in Italian prisons; how many have applied to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 30 June 1991, the latest date for which information is readily available, about 45 sentenced prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales were recorded as Italian citizens. Repatriations of prisoners are possible under the European convention on the transfer of sentenced persons provided the prisoner and both countries concerned consent. The Italian Government ratified the convention in October 1989, since when 26 Italian prisoners have asked to be repatriated. In five cases the application has been withdrawn or the prisoner released. In two cases the request has been refused. The remaining 19 cases are outstanding.

Primates Register

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to secure the establishment of a European primate register to conserve stocks of non-human primates used in scientific procedures.

Mrs. Rumbold: Effective measures to conserve stocks of non-human primates are clearly desirable. We are aware of an initiative from the Primate Society of Great Britain in this area and of continuing interest in such a scheme within Europe. The United Kingdom will play its full part in giving thorough consideration to any formal proposals which emerge.

Vehicle Theft Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the variety of non-custodial sentences given for the offence of taking a vehicle without consent for the years 1980-88 and *(b)* a breakdown of custodial and non-custodial sentences for the above offence for 1989 and 1990.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the tables. 1990 data are not yet available.

Table A—Number of offenders sentenced at magistrates' courts for offences of unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than a motor vehicle or pedal cycle by type of disposal 1980-89.

England and Wales

Year	Total for sentence	Absolute discharge	Conditional discharge	Fine	Probation order	Sentence disposals: Supervision order	Community service order	Attendance centre order	Care order	Fully suspended sentence	Immediate custody	Otherwise dealt with
Unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle												
1980	29,910	137	2,595	13,995	1,659	1,677	2,314	1,712	434	1,457	3,760	170
1981	26,404	133	2,436	11,055	1,734	1,428	2,436	1,694	342	1,352	3,582	212
1982	23,911	98	2,367	9,766	1,589	1,244	2,284	1,570	265	1,131	3,416	181
1983	20,677	86	2,028	7,894	1,553	1,115	2,270	1,493	197	737	3,219	85
1984	19,252	80	2,040	7,036	1,599	1,109	2,291	1,458	175	406	3,010	48
1985	19,220	87	2,079	6,798	1,721	1,179	2,129	1,497	158	445	3,080	47
1986	18,072	84	2,158	6,409	1,681	1,136	2,145	1,292	126	377	2,634	30
1987	17,136	67	2,112	6,091	1,736	1,107	1,973	1,166	94	418	2,305	67
1988[1]	16,366	64	2,153	5,873	1,799	1,013	1,880	1,076	77	353	2,006	62
1989	16,790	150	2,571	5,394	2,011	1,065	1,916	1,213	63	358	1,911	138
Unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than a motor vehicle or pedal cycle												
1980	171	—	29	115	1	5	5	6	2	1	5	2
1981	174	11	26	114	3	6	3	3	2	1	5	—
1982	161	10	25	111	2	5	1	3	—	1	3	—
1983	169	7	39	107	3	5	3	2	1	—	2	—
1984	164	2	27	115	—	6	2	9	—	—	2	1
1985	85	1	8	61	4	1	2	4	—	1	3	—
1986	84	3	12	65	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
1987	48	3	18	21	—	2	1	1	—	1	1	—
1988[1]	76	1	10	54	1	3	3	2	—	1	1	—
1989	124	—	23	63	10	5	13	3	—	2	5	—

[1] These two triable-either-way offences were reclassified as summary offences under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (12 October 1988)

Table B—Number of offenders sentenced at Crown Court for offences of unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than a motor vehicle or pedal cycle by type of disposal 1980-89.

England and Wales

Year	Total for sentence	Absolute discharge	Conditional discharge	Fine	Probation order	Sentence disposals: Supervision order	Community service order	Attendance centre order	Care order	Fully suspended sentence	Immediate custody	Otherwise dealt with
Unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle												
1980	7,394	7	276	619	534	62	703	—	22	586	4,535	50
1981	6,911	13	262	465	535	44	737	—	25	569	4,219	42
1982	6,512	5	310	370	505	44	773	—	17	489	3,959	40
1983	4,938	10	223	384	472	32	705	—	9	361	2,667	75
1984	3,421	3	209	297	478	16	577	—	5	233	1,554	49
1985	3,939	5	226	331	633	36	654	23	7	259	1,748	17
1986	3,921	5	252	332	618	43	611	18	4	251	1,764	23
1987	4,195	3	259	377	669	35	749	30	4	300	1,747	22
1988[1]	4,130	7	274	356	801	32	677	24	4	365	1,652	38
1989	1,668	1	94	131	398	22	249	12	2	117	604	38
Unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than a motor vehicle or pedal cycle												
1980	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—

Year	Total for sentence	Sentence disposals: Absolute discharge	Conditional discharge	Fine	Probation order	Supervision order	Community service order	Attendance centre order	Care order	Fully suspended sentence	Immediate custody	Otherwise dealt with
1981	8	—	—	5	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
1982	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983	3	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
1984	3	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
1985	5	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	—
1986	8	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	6	—
1987	14	—	2	2	1	1	2	—	—	3	3	—
1988[1]	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
1989	15	—	1	2	3	—	3	—	—	—	5	1

[1] These two triable-either-way offences were reclassified as summary offences under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (12 October 1988)

Table C. Number of persons sentenced to immediate custody at all courts for offences of unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than motor vehicle or pedal cycle by type of disposal and sentence length 1989.

England and Wales

Offence	Total immediate custody	Custodial sentence disposal: Young offender institution	Partly suspended sentence	Unsuspended sentence	Sentence length: 6 months and under	Over 6 months and up to 1 year	Over 1 year and up to 18 months	Over 18 months and up to 2 years	Over 2 years and up to 3 years	Over 3 years
Unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle	2,515	1,617	12	886	2,459	41	11	3	1	—
Unauthorised taking of a conveyance other than a motor vehicle or pedal cycle	10	3	1	6	9	1	—	—	—	—

Television (Sponsorship)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage and type of television programmes will be allowed sponsorship by commercial companies; and what safeguards exist to prevent sponsors from influencing the quality and control of programmes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the Independent Televison Commission code of programme sponsorship, any television programme may be sponsored, except news and current affairs. No sponsor is permitted any influence on either the content or the scheduling of a programme.

Animals (Scientific Procedures)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the numbers of primates used in scientific procedures in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland which were wild-caught and captive bred, respectively, in each year from 1981 to the current year.

Mrs. Rumbold: Statistics about the origin of primates held or used are not kept centrally. The number of scientific procedures performed on primates in Great Britain for the years 1981 to 1990 is given in table 18 of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 1990", Cm. 1574, a copy of which is in the Library. In Northern Ireland only two scientific procedures were performed on primates over the period 1981 to 1990.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Crossbows

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many adults and children have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in each of the last five years in incidents arising from the firing of crossbows in (i) public and (ii) private places.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of currently recorded homicide offences where the death resulted from the firing of a crossbow for the years 1986 to 1990 are as follows: 1986 nil, 1987 one, 1988 one, 1989 nil, 1990 three—two in one incident. All the victims were adults. It is not known whether the incidents occurred in public or private places. No information is available on the number of accidental deaths involving crossbows nor on incidents involving injuries whether criminal or accidental.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest estimate of the number of crossbows within the United Kingdom; what existing laws cover the purchase and use of crossbows; and what representations he has received from the police and others about new laws covering the use of crossbows, including licensing the ownership of crossbows.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the number of crossbows in the United Kingdom is not recorded

centrally, but I understand from Barnett International, the largest manufacturer of crossbows in the United Kingdom, that its latest estimate of the number of crossbows in circulation is between 250,000 and 300,000.

The Crossbows Act 1987 prohibits the sale of crossbows to, and their purchase by, persons under the age of 17. The Act also makes it an offence for a person under 17 to have a crossbow in his possession, unless under the supervision of someone aged 21 or over. There are a number of other measures that bear upon crossbow misuse against people, property or animals. These include the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Offences Against the Person Act 1861, the Criminal Damage Act 1971, the Protection of Animals Act 1911, the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 and the Deer Act 1963.

We have received no representations from the police on crossbow controls since the passage of the Crossbows Act 1987.

In the last 12 months there has been one parliamentary question on crossbow controls. We have also received 21 items of correspondence on this issue from Members of Parliament and six letters from the public broadly favouring some form of further control.

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the Office of Fair Trading to consider the competitive aspects of bookmaker-owned greyhound tracks supplying races to the bookmaker afternoon greyhound service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Anyone who believes that they have evidence of anti-competitive behaviour should report the matter to the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals for legislation to put greyhound racing on a par with horse racing; and what plans he has to treat the two industries equally, with regard to off-course betting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's views on the need for legislation to amend the law on betting on greyhound racing were set out in our recent reply—Cm 1757—to the Home Affairs Committee's report "Financing of Greyhound Racing"—HC 463.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutes which control the staging of greyhound racing, greyhound totalisators and on-course betting on greyhound tracks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The statutory controls on betting at greyhound tracks are contained in the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963, as amended. Further regulations governing the operation of totalisators at greyhound tracks are contained in two statutory instruments made under the 1963 Act. These are the Dog Racecourse Totalisator Regulations 1967, as amended, and the Dog Racecourse Totalisator (Percentage) Order 1980. The Dog Racecourse Totalisator (Percentage) Order 1991 was published on 22 November, and comes into force on 20 December.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Office of Fair Trading considered the competitive aspects of bookmaker-owned greyhound tracks supplying racing to the bookmaker afternoon greyhound service; how long the inquiry took; and who supplied information to the inquiry.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Office of Fair Trading's informal inquiries are made under section 2(2) of the Fair Trading Act 1973, which imposes on the Director-General of Fair Trading a duty to keep commercial activities under review and to collect information with a view to his becoming aware of monopoly situations or uncompetitive practices. The OFT has considered whether the ownership of greyhound tracks by off-course bookmakers raises concerns under the competition legislation, but to date no evidence has been received to suggest formal action is warranted. Details of information collected by the OFT are subject to confidentiality requirements, particularly section 133 of the Fair Trading Act 1973, and cannot therefore be disclosed.

Young Offenders

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances teenagers are placed in young offender institutions for non-violent offences; and whether he has any plans to end this practice;

(2) under what circumstances it is his policy for persons aged 15 years to be locked up in prisons or young offenders' institutions; and whether he has any plans to end this policy;

(3) from what age young people who have committed offences can be dealt with through the prison system;

(4) if he will bring forward proposals to remove persons under the age of 21 years from the prison system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: From the age of 10, juveniles convicted of murder or manslaughter may be detained under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Section 53 detention is available from the age of 14 for juveniles convicted of other offences carrying a maximum penalty for an adult of imprisonment for 14 years or more. Juveniles aged under sixteen and a half years who are detained under section 53 are normally held in the child care system rather than Prison Service establishments. Detention in a young offender institution is available for males from the age of 14 and females from the age of 15 for any offence for which an adult may be sentenced to imprisonment. Male defendants aged 15 and 16 may be remanded in prison. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 provides for the abolition of courts' power to sentence 14-year-old boys to detention in a young offender institution; for the ending of prison remands for 15 and 16-year-old males: and tightens the restrictions on the use of custodial sentences for young offenders.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he intends to take to prevent suicides at Feltham and other young offenders' institutes;

(2) what plans he has for a public inquiry into the suicide rate at young offenders' institutions.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, Judge Tumim, prepared at my right hon. Friend's predecessor's request last year a report on suicide and self-harm in Prison Service establishments. My right hon. Friend responded to that report in the White Paper

"Custody, Care and Justice", Cm 1647. We have also received, and circulated to all governors, the summary report of research carried out by Dr. Alison Liebling of the Cambridge university institute of criminology into self-injury among young offenders. A wide-ranging programme of work is in hand to try to reduce the incidence of suicide and self-harm in young offender institutions and other penal establishments. In work with young offenders, the emphasis is on the development of personal officer schemes, the provision of useful activity and measures to address problems of vulnerability and peer group pressure. A recent initiative at Feltham, which I welcome, has been the introduction of weekly case conferences to review the care of the most vulnerable prisoners.

I do not think that a public inquiry into the suicide rate at young offender institutions would materially advance the substantial efforts already being made at Feltham and elsewhere to provide care for a particularly vulnerable section of the prison population.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours a day he advises that teenagers should be kept in solitary confinement in prisons or young offenders' institutions.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no such thing as solitary confinement in prisons or young offenders' institutions. However, an inmate may be removed from association with other inmates where this appears desirable either for the maintenance of good order or discipline, or in his own interests, under young offender institution rule 46 or prison rule 43. The length of time for which an inmate is removed from association will depend on the circumstances of each case. No inmate should be segregated for longer than is absolutely necessary. Each case must be kept under continuous review.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide alternatives to custodial sentences for young offenders.

Mr. John Patten: A wide range of community sentences already exists for young offenders. The emphasis is on dealing with young offenders in the community wherever possible. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 establishes a new sentencing framework providing courts with a wider range of strengthened community penalties. The Act creates two new community sentences—the curfew order backed by electronic monitoring and the combined probation and community service order—which will be available from the age of 16.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigation he has made into the psychological effect on persons under the age of 16 years of being held in young offender institutions and being held for long periods in solitary confinement in cells; and whether he has any plans to make further investigations.

Mrs. Rumbold: An assessment of how young offenders adjust to a custodial environment was the subject of one of the studies in "Applying Psychology to Imprisonment", published in 1987. A further research study was completed this year, which compares regimes in young offender institutions and local authority community homes for juveniles sentenced under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 for serious offences.

Research has also recently been undertaken by Dr. Alison Liebling of the Cambridge university institute of criminology, into self-injury among young offenders. The need for further research in this area is kept under regular review.

Visas

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time now being taken between the receipt of interview notes from the United Kingdom high commission in New Delhi by his Department concerning an application for leave to enter by the fiancé of a British citizen and the calling of the fiancé for interview here.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current average response time for all interview cases referred from India is 75 days; the period is from the receipt of the papers in this country until the dispatch of a report to the post. Separate information on particular categories of cases is not available centrally.

Gambling

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effect the evening opening of betting shops will have on the level of gambling in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such assessment has yet been made. The effect of evening opening of licensed betting offices on levels of gambling is one of the matters on which the recent Home Office consultation document invited views from interested parties. Evidence received about the effect on levels of gambling will be one of the factors taken into account in the Government's further consideration of whether to allow evening opening.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on gambling as it relates to horse racing and greyhound racing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is Government policy on gambling, including betting on horseracing and greyhound racing, that it should be subject to statutory control to ensure that it is conducted honestly and fairly, and that gambling should not be positively encouraged.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Home Office began its review of section 19 of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963; and how long he expects the review to take.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The review has not yet begun. It will be undertaken as quickly as possible, but the issues are complex and it is not clear at this stage how long it will take to complete.

Football (Policing)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a pricing policy for the policing of football matches based upon club attendance levels and past records of incidents.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Charges made by police authorities for the policing of football matches under section 15 of the Police Act 1964 reflect the number of officers deployed.

Home Office circular 36/1991 encouraged chief officers to discuss deployment with football clubs, taking account of all relevant factors, but ultimately it must be for the chief officer to decide how many officers need to be deployed on each occasion.

Small Shops

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to remove the threat of prosecution from small local shops which have traditionally opened late in the evening and on Sundays to sell their full product range; and what representations he has had from the Greek Cypriot and other ethnic minority communities on this subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The institution of proceedings for breaches of the Shops Act 1950 is a matter for local authorities. Proposals for extended evening shop trading hours, and for small local shops to trade fully on Sundays, are among those which have been put to me in my discussions with numerous interest groups about reform of the Act. Records of our correspondents on these proposals are not classified by ethnic community.

Urban Crime

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to deal with urban crime.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am launching today a new initiative: the urban crime fund. This will provide targeted additional funds to selected forces on an experimental basis. Merseyside, Northumbria and West Yorkshire will each be eligible for additional funding in 1992-93 of up to some £3·6 million.

The additional funding—made available direct to police authorities through the Government's urban programme—will be targeted on the inner cities, including city challenge areas. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to a co-ordinated attack on inner city problems in partnership with local authorities, the private sector and local communities.

The three police authorities will be invited to put proposals to me on how they would use the extra resources. I will be looking particularly for effective and innovative measures, including the mobilisation of local communities, in the fight against urban crime.

Racial Hatred

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his evaluation of the effectiveness of the law making it a criminal offence to incite racial hatred.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* The Government deplore any act likely or intended to stir up racial hatred. We believe that part III of the Public Order Act 1986 has played an important part in deterring such acts. We shall continue to keep the legislation and its operation under review.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Off-Balance Sheet Financing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to introduce legislation under which banks will be prevented from selling off-balance sheet financing schemes.

Mr. Maples: I have no such plans.

British Telecom

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any institution which provided a presentation for becoming a retail outlet in the BT share sale was rejected.

Mr. Maude: The Government selected eight organisations to act as share shops in the sale of shares in BT plc from among the various proposals received.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those institutions which made presentations with regard to the second BT share offer, in response to his invitation.

Mr. Maude: It is for the organisations concerned to disclose whether they made a submission in response to the Chancellor's invitation in his Budget speech for proposals from private sector organisations for a high street share dealing network.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria were used to evaluate the eight retail institutions' ability to undertake at relatively short notice the sale of BT shares, referred to in his answer of 22 October 1991, *Official Report*, column *505*.

Mr. Maude: The Government's objective was a network of share shops which, together, could respond to the high volumes of a public share sale while giving the public a choice of institutions. This was achieved with the selection of the eight firms who are participating in the BT share sale. The Government intend to build on these arrangements in future public share sales.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those institutions which wrote to his Department stating an interest with regard to the second BT share offer but did not make a presentation.

Mr. Maude: The proposals received from organisations in response to the Government's share shops initiative ranged widely in the extent of detail in which they were made.

Life Assurance and Pension Payments

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of expenditure of total disposable household income was accounted for by life assurance and pension fund payments in 1990; and what is the estimated percentage level for the current year.

Mr. Maples: Household disposable income, and hence expenditure of that income, excludes amounts paid as pension contributions, whether to the state scheme or to occupational schemes. Contributions to the latter type of scheme, together with life assurance premiums paid by individuals, are estimated to have amounted in 1990 to 7·6

per cent. of households' current expenditure. The latter aggregate has been adjusted to include the occupational scheme contributions. There is no official estimate of this percentage in 1991.

Contributions to the state scheme are intended to fund social security benefits of all types and no estimate is made of the proportion which notionally finances state pensions.

EC Membership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish the effect of EC membership to date on the United Kingdom balance of payments in terms of 1990 prices and on the United Kingdom rate of economic growth forecast by Her Majesty's Treasury in Cmnd. 4289 together with *(a)* the actual average per capita rate of growth from 1973 to 1990 and comparable data for the decade ending in 1973 and *(b)* the average non-oil balance of payments surplus or deficit with the EEC Six and with other countries in each period in terms of 1990 prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: It is not possible to produce reliable estimates of the effects of EC membership on the United Kingdom balance of payments or on the rate of economic growth. Data requested on the growth of GDP per capita can be derived from statistics published by the Central Statistical Office in "Economic Trends Annual Supplement", 1990 edition, and on trade balances with the EC Six and other countries from the CSO's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics Annual Supplement 1991".

Town and Country Building Society

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the affairs of the Town and Country building society.

Mr. Maples: The Woolwich building society issued a press release on 19 November stating that the board of the Town and Country building society had agreed to recommend to its members a transfer of the society's engagements to the Woolwich building society and that arrangements for the transfer, subject to audit and to regulatory and other relevant requirements, were accordingly proceeding.

TESSAs

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to remind banks and building societies of the specification of section 4 of S.I. 2361/1990 that tax-exempt special savings accounts must be transferable from one society or institution to another society or institution.

Mr. Maude: There is no need, since there is no evidence to suggest that institutions are not allowing savers to transfer their TESSAs elsewhere.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Gloucester, 13 November, *Official Report*, column *526*, if he will review the extent to which TESSA issuers are departing from the aims of TESSAs, as stated in the 1990 Budget, by levying penalties for withdrawing interest.

Mr. Maude: The TESSA rules specify the maximum amount of interest which may be withdrawn without loss of tax exemption. Within those limits, the terms under which withdrawals may be made are a matter for agreement between investors and operators.

EC (Government Debt)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the unfunded maintenance backlog liability on public sector capital assets by member state of the EC and the effect such unfunding has on the calculation of each member state's Government debt as set out in the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(2) if he will list the unfunded nuclear reactor decommissioning liability by member state of the EC and the effect such unfunding has on the calculation of each member state's Government debt as set out in the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(3) if he will list the notionally funded and unfunded public sector employees pensions liability by member states of the EC and the effect such unfunding has on the calculation of each member state's Government debt as set out in the draft treaty on economic and monetary union.

Mr. Maude: Standard definitions of Government debt measure the cumulative liability incurred on past borrowing, which accords with the common usage of the term "debt". They do not include any measure of unfunded liabilities. The requested data on unfunded liabilities are not readily available.

Single Currency

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the present and future implications for the United Kingdom Budget of proposals for a single currency in the draft treaty on economic and monetary union as a result of different methods of accounting for liabilities in each member state's national accounts.

Mr. Maude: National accounting conventions in other EC member states have no obvious implications, either now or in the future, for United Kingdom budgetary policy.

Company Cars

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the Government's policy regarding the taxation of company cars and on the increase in the taxation of company cars which has taken place since 1979.

Mr. Maude: The Government's policy is that, so far as possible, there should be broad neutrality in the tax treatment of remuneration paid in cash and in kind. In keeping with that policy, the aim has been to ensure that, as regards cars provided to employees by employers, the statutory income tax scale charges realistically reflect the value of the benefit of a car's availability for private use. That has involved substantial increases in the level of the scales since 1979.

The scale charges and the total tax burden on the car industry are of course kept under close review.

Friendly Societies Bill

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to introduce a new Friendly Societies Bill.

Mr. Maples: The Government remain firmly committed to this legislation and we will introduce the Bill at the earliest opportunity.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Call-logging information for the three buildings in which my right hon. Friend's department is the major occupier shows that 620 calls were made to directory inquiries in October 1991.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what present aid projects exist in India; and if he will list them.

Mrs. Chalker: Projects in India receiving British bilateral aid at present are as follows:

A. Bilateral country programme financing
Visakhapatnam slum improvement
Hyderabad slum improvement
Indore slum improvement
Calcutta slum improvement
Vijayawada slum improvement
Training and study tours in Aslum improvement
Indo-British Fertiliser Education
Rain-fed farming
Karnataka Social Forestry
Gujarat Family Welfare
Orissa Health and Family Welfare
St Stephen's Hospital Maternity Wing
Andhra Pradesh School Health
Andhra Pradesh Primary Education
Water Training Networks
Maharashtra Rural Water
Dadri Power Station Dry Ash Handling
Obra Power Station Energy Audit
BEI/NTPC Twinning
Technical Assistance to the Power Finance Corporation on economic appraisal
Study on long-term issues in the power sector
Equipment for the oil and natural gas sector including pipe lathe machine, conduit-type gate valves, and multi-phase pump
Hindustan Zinc Mine and Smelter
Churcha West Mine longwall coalmining equipment
Longwall spares system
GDK11A mine longwall coalmining equipment
Central Mining Research Station
Longwall Mining Centre
Technical Assistance to Indian manufacturers of longwall mining equipment
Study of de-pillaring in coalmines
Operational assistance and training to coalmines
Environmental study of Amlohri Coalmine
Operational assistance, training and spares for Amlohri Coalmine
Assistance to the health services of Coal India Limited
Indian School of Mines
BALCO Power Station
Rehabilitation of Nagarjunasagar Hydro-electric Power Station
Power Sector training
Operational assistance to Rihand Power Station
Train describer for Delhi Railways
Equipment for Indian Railways including flashbutt-welding machines, head-hardened rails, rheostatic brakes and turbo-chargers
Training in railways management, vehicle suspension systems, electrification and bridge technology

Technical assistance in the health sector for:
Blood transfusion
Medical education technology
Blindness
Haemoglobinopathy control, TB research
Viral hepatitis research
Rotavirus infection
Mother and child health training
Other training

Technical assistance for education on the following topics:
Indira Gandhi National Open University
Educational Media Research Centre, Pune
Central Board for Secondary Education on English training
Various institutions for training awards

Technical assistance on Science and Technology includes the following research projects:
Heat Pumps
Instrument servicing
Micro-processor education
Central research facility
Naval architecture
Offshore oil engineering
Optical fibres
Instrumentation and photo-fabrication
Computer for Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

Training for public administration on the following topics:
Development project planning and management
Public enterprises management
Planning and management for rural development
Trainer development
Foremen
Parliamentary procedures
Legal advice
Taxation
Public media services

Technical assistance for renewable natural resources research and extension on the following topics:
Foot and mouth disease
Seed technology
Pathology of oilseeds
Land resources planning
Milk marketing
(Conservation of flora and fauna with Bombay Natural History Society)
Land and soil survey for forestry
Management training for agricultural extension management
Training for rural credit
Common property management of forests
Mysore Paper Mills forestry
Training for various forestry institutions
Mangalore fisheries
Bay of Bengal fisheries
Recombinant DNA technology
Animal diseases research
Equine influenza
Meat species identification
Equine breeding

Technical assistance for industry includes:
Quality control and marketing for export
Training in telecommunications
Training in ports management
Training in road transport management

Technical assistance in the water sector covers:
Ganga sewerage treatment
Water pollution
Madras water and sewerage management
Water supply management training

Groundwater development
Solid waste management
Orientation Programme for Urban Health
Delhi water and sewerage management
Geographic Information Systems for groundwater development

Other projects include:
Andhra Pradesh cyclone relief and rehabilitation
Various gifts and small projects under the Head of Mission Scheme
Training on cross-cutting issues including Women in Development; gender awareness; legal literacy for women; environment management, impact assessment and monitoring; and structural conservation

In addition to this list of projects which are under implementation in 1991-92, there are approximately 70 projects in various stages of formulation, appraisal and approval on which some resources have been expended in their preparation.

B. Aid and Trade Provision
Equipment for Uri Hydro-electric Power Station (co-financed with the Swedish Government).

C. Joint Funding Scheme—agencies and projects supported include:

Aga Khan Foundation
School Improvement
Water shed management development
Rural support programme
Rural education and advancement development programme

Action for Disability and Development
Orthopaedic workshop
Development and training groups of people with disability
Horticultural training programme

Alternative for India Development
Non-formal education and skill training for tribal women
Family planning

Appropriate technology for Tibetans
Demonstration integrated farm
Decentralised dairy
Improved chulus

Care
Rajasthan agricultural and natural resources
Centre for Human Development

Harvest help
Village rehabilitation

Hedley Roberts Trust
Income generation for the disabled

Help Age
Age care training programme
Community based rehabilitation

Henry Doubleday Research Association
Genetic conservation and exploitation of prosopis cineraria

Homeless International
Housing and documentation

International Agricultural Training Programme
Rural trainers programme
Impact foundation
Leprosy disability prevention and limitation
India Development group—rural development training

Inter-care
Small farmers wasteland development
Villpatti integrated village development

International Boys' Towns Trust
Afforestation

ITGD
Boatyard development

Kaduna Trust (aid for India)
Boys Hostel

Marie Stopes International
Family Life Education
Soap Drama—family life/responsible sexual behaviour
Contraceptive social marketing
Workplace family planning and preventative healthcare
Afforestation
Small business development

Population concern
Womens' development

Project Mala
Project Mala

Ryder Cheshire
Mobile TB units

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
Community development
Education for rural development
Harijan people's awareness project

Vetaid
Community dairy

Village Services Trust
Health and Community development

World Vision
Child Survival project

Y Care International
Integrated tribal development projects

Cafod
Health and Education programme
Community health and social education programme

Christian Aid
Madras Christian Council Social Services
Schools project
Voluntary Health Association
East Godaviri District Project
Rural Education Society
Voluntary Health Association projects
Rural Education and Action for Development
Crop agricultural and irrigation programme
Activists for Social Alternatives
Tribal Development project

Save the Children Fund
Collective Surgery
Rehabilitation and vocational training for handicapped children
Rural education project
Nutrition programme

This list of joint funding scheme—JFS—projects in India is incomplete. Agencies which receive block grants from the joint funding scheme have yet to notify us of all the projects which they are implementing, this year. For example, OXFAM which used joint funding scheme resources for about 200 projects in India has yet to notify us of its allocations for 1991-92. Other agencies are also likely to add to their list of projects financed from JFS resources.

D. Commonwealth Development Corporation—Projects include:

Project	*Activity*
Andhra Petrochemicals Ltd	Oxo-alcohols production
Apollo Tyres Ltd	Tyre production
Asian Coffee Ltd	Soluble-coffee factory
Biax Packaging Ltd	Polypropylene film

Project	Activity
Consolidated Fibres and Chemicals Ltd	Acrylic fibre production
Creditcapital Venture Fund (India)	Venture capital
ITC Agro-Tech Ltd	Vegetable oil production
Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India Ltd	Development finance
Modi Threads Ltd	Synthetic thread production
Rane Power Steering Ltd	Production of power steering units
Sakthi Soyas Ltd	Soybean processing
Shipping Credit and Investment Company of India Ltd	Development finance for shipping and fishing
Unit Trust of India	Venture Capital fund
Haryana Telecom Ltd	Cable manufacture

Ethiopia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is being given to, or is under consideration for, Ethiopia in *(a)* getting relief aid to those in need, *(b)* stimulating food production and *(c)* respect for human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: Including our share of EC assistance we have committed £53 million emergency aid to Ethiopia since September 1990. Our aid includes £6·2 million for road transport, airlifts and other infrastructure essential for getting relief to the needy.

We are financing the following projects aimed at stimulating food production.

Project/Programme	Description/Aims
Teff Research	Collaborative research to improve varieties of Teff.
Rainfall Monitoring	Rainfall and crop development estimation and monitoring systems.
Sidamo Rangelands	Improved food security for ten local communities in South Sidamo; managed by CARE.
Koisha Rural Development	Increase food production and strengthen rural economy in Koisha region of Sidamo; managed by SOS-Sahel.
Land Use—Western Hararghe	Introduce sustainable system of land use for 17,000 families in Western Hararghe; managed by CARE.
Dairy Goat Project	Increase rural incomes by improving the productivity of dairy goats managed by women; managed by FARM Africa.
Projects funded under the Joint Funding Scheme	
Action Aid (Small Scale Seed Production)	Develop economically viable and sustainable small scale seed enterprises.
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (Rural Development)	To increase productive capacity of land.
OXFAM (Delanta Agriculture)	To promote post drought agricultural rehabilitation and prevent environmental degradation of the land.
OXFAM (Hararghe Agricultural)	Construct a new seed store and to replace seed stocks lost in the drought.
Projects funded under emergency relief aid	
Christian Aid	Agricultural tools for Ethiopia.

We have made clear to the Ethiopians the importance we attach to respect for human rights. We are considering what help we might give for this and other aspects of good government.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid to Ethiopia; what was the level in each of the last 10 years at current prices; and what plans he has to increase the level of aid before 1993.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1991 we have committed over £26 million bilateral emergency assistance to Ethiopia including 79,000 tonnes of food. We expect to continue to respond generously to meet emergency needs. Our development programme for 1991 is worth about £3·5 million.

Between 1981 and 1990 the United Kingdom provided bilateral aid—development and emergency assistance—to Ethiopia as follows:

Year	Total (£,000)	Total at constant 1990 prices (£,000)
1981	563	941
1982	5,645	8,769
1983	3,433	5,068
1984	7,004	9,884
1985	28,058	37,446
1986	9,627	12,409
1987	8,552	11,399
1988	18,544	21,324
1989	11,691	12,570
1990	20,042	20,042

As to future levels of development aid, I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 25 November, at column *388*.

UNICEF

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial pledge was made by the United Kingdom in support of the United Nations children's fund at the New York pledging conference on 5-6 November; what proportion of the total funds available to UNICEF for 1992 will be provided by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the future of UNICEF in the light of its funding base.

Mrs. Chalker: In common with most other major donors we have not yet announced our pledge for UNICEF's 1992 programme. I expect to do so early next year.

Over recent years UNICEF has acquired a very strong funding base and the current pattern seems likely to continue, but, for the reasons I have given, the total amounts available in 1992 are not yet known.

WALES

Surgical Procedures

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of new health technology on surgical procedures and treatments in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The NHS in Wales continually assesses the costs and benefits of new health technology.

As part of this process, in 1990 the Welsh health planning forum commissioned an expert report on the

possible impact of emerging and future technologies on the delivery of health care. It was circulated widely and prompted a useful debate between scientists, clinicians and managers in NHS Wales.

Building on this, the planning forum, in partnership with the World Health Organisation and the King's Fund college, held a conference in Cardiff in October this year focusing on the potential for shifting care from the hospital to the home. It brought together international experts and raised awareness of technology's potential for creating a more people-centred and community-based health care service.

The conference pointed up the opportunities for de-institutionalising health care in an environment where before too long perhaps up to 60 per cent. of surgery will be performed on a day basis with over 80 per cent. being bloodless.

The use of endoscopy is transforming clinical practice in the fields of gynaecology, orthopaedic and general surgery. Endoscopes are flexible tubes used to examine, photograph and take biopsies from the body's cavities and organs without the trauma of surgery, and often while the patient is conscious.

Similarly, lasers have superseded some more traditional surgical approaches to treating skin, eye and gynaecological disorders and a wide range of other conditions.

In addition, new techniques commonly referred to as key-hole surgery are becoming widely used. Laparoscopic cholycystectomies—lap-cholies—are replacing open abdomen gall stone operations. In the field of orthopaedic surgery, a damaged knee cartilage can be removed without opening the knee joint. Recovering from these operations is much quicker than the earlier kind and people do not need to stay in hospital so long. Some coronary artery bypass surgery can be avoided by using balloon angiography. This technique passes a balloon into the artery in a catheter. The balloon is then inflated to enlarge the artery, remove blockages and allow the blood to flow freely.

These and similar developments are having a profound effect on the size and nature of our hospitals. What counts is not hospital bed numbers but providing people with the right services in the right settings.

Sports Council

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amounts of grant he has given the Sports Council for Wales, in real terms, for each of the years 1980 to 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The grant in aid allocations to the Sports Council for Wales for the years 1980-81 to 1991-92 adjusted by the gross domestic product—market prices—deflator at 1990-91 prices, are as follows:

	£ million
1980-81	4·176
1981-82	4·297
1982-83	4·482
1983-84	4·143
1984-85	4·058
1985-86	4·529
1986-87	4·852
1987-88	4·726
1988-89	4·788
1989-90	4·769
1990-91	4·782
1991-92	4·860

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of farms currently covered by environmentally sensitive area agreements in Wales are subject to whole farm agreements.

Mr. David Hunt: Farmers who choose to join the Lleyn peninsula environmentally sensitive area scheme must enter all their land into the scheme; all farms in the scheme are therefore covered by whole farm agreements. In the Cambrian mountains ESA, it is only that area of the farm which is classed as semi-natural rough grazing which has to be entered and, optionally, woodland and hay meadows. In consequence, none of the ESA agreements in the Cambrian mountains scheme cover the whole farm.

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles he and his Ministers have travelled on British Rail during the course of their official duties during the last year.

Mr. David Hunt: In excess of 50,000 miles.

Regional Selective Assistance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those companies in the Wrexham area which have qualified for regional selective assistance in the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of offers of regional selective assistance are confidential to the company and the Welsh Office. The following information relates to accepted offers of assistance by companies for projects in the Wrexham travel-to-work-area over the last five years which have received publicity.

Betts and Co.
Brother Industries (UK) Ltd.
Courtaulds Films and Packaging (Holdings)
Cyanamid of GB Ltd.
Dowty Koike Ltd.
E & L Instruments Ltd.
Environmental Services (NW) Ltd.
European Fine Blanking Ltd.
Fibrax Ltd.
GKK Plastics Ltd.
Honkley Eng. & Marine Co. Ltd.
Hoya Lens UK Ltd.
Impetus Packaging Ltd.
Kronospan Ltd.
Label Research Ltd.
M & C Plastics Ltd.
Microtech Precision Ltd.
Nationwide Boards Ltd.
Olaf Foods Manuf. Ltd.
Owens Corning Fiberglass (GB) Ltd.
Processed Timber Products Ltd.
Rexham (UK) Ltd.
Richard Burbridge Ltd.
Rubery Owen—Rockwell Ltd.
Sharp Electronics (UK) Ltd.
Stadex Holdings Ltd.
Vossen Ltd.
Wrexham Lager Beer Co. Ltd.
Wrexham Scaffold Ltd.
Zeta Communications Plc

Local Government

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the proposed changes to the structure of local government in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has received responses to his consultation paper from both Welsh local authority associations; from each Welsh county council and district council; from individual community councils, and their representative bodies; from a number of professional bodies and societies; and from many individuals, including several Members of Parliament. The vast majority of these responses express support for the establishment of a system of unitary authorities in Wales.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present level of unemployment in the Clwyd, South-West constituency.

Mr. David Hunt: On 10 October 1991 there were 2,314 unemployed claimants in the Clwyd, South-West parliamentary constituency.

Valleys Loan Scheme

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many loans under the valleys loan scheme have been made to date; what is the total value of such loans; how many jobs they have created or safeguarded; and how many of the recipient firms are still in business.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1 April 1988, a total of 178 loans have been placed by the Welsh Development Agency to companies in the valleys programme area. The total value of these loans was just over £1·5 million with an expectation that 799 new jobs would be created. One hundred and twenty-seven—71 per cent.—are in place, with a projection of creating over 550 new jobs and a value of £1·2 million. These figures include loans made under the valleys small loan scheme, the valleys enterprise loan scheme and the rural small loan scheme.

Valleys Programme

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a breakdown of expenditure, by local authority district and by category of expenditure, under the valleys programme from 1988 to date.

Mr. David Hunt: Provision for the programme for the valleys area over the five years of the programme is £800 million. A breakdown of outturn for 1988-89 to 1990-91 and estimated outturn for 1991-92 by category of expenditure is shown in the table. It is not possible to provide a breakdown by local authority district except at disproportionate cost.

Programme for the Valleys Expenditure

	(£ million)		
	1988-89 Outturn	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*
Urban Programme	11·950	16·000	19·400
Urban Development/UIG[2]	2·600	7·200	6·000
RIG[2]	28·875	16·100	14·500
WDA			
Factories	20·730	20·950	23·100
Land Reclamation	11·900	15·500	14·700
Environmental	0·780	0·600	0·600
Urban Renewal Unit	0·700	1·570	3·260
Investment[1]	1·325	1·750	2·730
Business Development	0·720	1·000	1·000
Corporate Planning/Research	0·100	0·100	0·050
Roads	11·100	11·730	15·270
Employment Department	48·600	49·670	48·200
Total	139·380	142·170	148·810

[1] 1991-92 figure gives provision rather than estimated outturn.
[2] These programmes are demand-led.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total sum spent in regional aid in the valleys programme area, by year and by category of expenditure, (*a*) in the two years before regional development grants were abolished and (*b*) since regional development grants were abolished.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Scheme	*Value of grant paid by year (£ million)*				
	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Regional Development Grant II[1]	7·3	9·9	17·2	7·7	6·9
Regional Selective Assistance	8·7	9·3	11·6	8·2	7·1
Regional Enterprise Grants[2]	—	—	0·1	0·2	0·5
Total	16·0	19·2	28·9	16·1	14·5

[1] RDGII closed to new applications 31 March 1988.
[2] Scheme introduced 1 April 1988.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the annual changes in unemployment by local authority districts in the valleys programme area, and the comparable information for Wales and the United Kingdom as a whole from 1988 to date.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table.

Unemployed Claimants—Annual changes (October to October)

District[1]	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Blaenau Gwent	−651	−725	−500	594
Torfaen	−346	−473	−53	648
Islwyn	−542	−773	−86	557
Merthyr Tydfil	−462	−386	35	397
Cynon Valley	−377	−721	−163	880
Rhondda	−805	−702	123	973

District[1]	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Ogwr	−610	−254	−35	393
Llŵ Valley	−354	−336	−124	359
Neath	−364	−508	53	256
Afan	−158	−155	10	145
Brecknock	−49	−123	26	53
Taff Ely	−853	−719	−78	823
Llanelli	−272	−191	−70	248
Dinefwr	−128	−157	21	132
Rhymney Valley	−1,120	−593	161	939
Total Valleys programme area	−7,091	−6,816	−680	7,397
Wales	−30,367	−31,169	−484	31,059
United Kingdom	−630,522	−483,018	34,776	755,370

Source: Employment Department.
[1] Data relate to wards within the districts covered by the Valleys Programme Area and not to the district as a whole.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department undertakes exercises at six-monthly intervals to assess usage of this service. The last monitoring exercise showed an average of 50 calls per week from the main offices in Cardiff.

Revenue Support Grant

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what level he proposes to set the total of revenue support grant to Welsh local authorities in 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: I announced on 23 July that I proposed to set the total of aggregate external finance—AEF—the level of central Government support for local authority revenue spending, at £2·383 million, an increase of 6·7 per cent. over the equivalent amount for 1991-92; but that this figure would be adjusted to reflect the transfer out of local authority control of the six major higher education institutions in Wales, including the Polytechnic of Wales, from 1 April 1992. I have concluded that this adjustment should be confirmed at £34·6 million, the provisional sum I identified in July. I now propose that the level of AEF for 1992-93 should be £2,348·4 million.

A comparable adjustment will be made to the level of total standard spending of £2,639 million that I announced in July.

AEF support has three components: the distributable amount of non-domestic rates, the total of relevant specific and supplementary grants, and revenue support grant.

As I announced to the House on 6 November, I intend to specify that the distributable amount from the non-domestic rating account be £536 million on the basis that the Welsh national non-domestic rating multiplier for 1992-93 will be 42·5.

I propose that relevant specific and supplementary grants towards local authority revenue expenditure should total £195·3 million.

I further propose that the total of revenue support grant should be £1,617·1 million of which £1,616·0 million should be paid to Welsh county and district councils and £1·1 million to certain specified bodies.

My officials are today writing to Welsh local authorities setting out my proposals for the component amounts of AEF and inviting their views. I am placing a copy of that consultation letter, which details the relevant specific and supplementary grants and the amounts to be paid to specified bodies, in the Library of the House.

I will also provide an additional £5·985 million, outside AEF, for the payment of a special grant in 1992-93 to meet the estimated revenue cost to Welsh district authorities of council tax implementation. The special grant arrangements will be the subject of a separate consultation letter to be issued shortly.

Early in December I will be notifying Welsh local authorities of my proposals for the distribution and population reports setting out the basis on which I propose to distribute revenue support grant among county and district councils, and the rules for calculating the relevant population of the areas of county and district councils for the purpose of the distribution of non-domestic rate income. I shall lay these reports before the House in due course.

Charge Capping

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has proposals for community charge capping of Welsh local authorities in 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today written to the leader and the chief executive of each Welsh local authority informing them that I do not intend to announce charge-capping criteria in advance of next year's annual budgetary round. This is a continuation of the arrangements that have applied in Wales for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

In my letter I have warned that I will subject to very careful scrutiny the expenditure proposals of Welsh local authorities for 1992-93 and will not hesitate to exercise my charge-capping powers in respect of any authority whose budget proposals I consider to be unacceptable.

PRIME MINISTER

Natural History Museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will publish the names of the trustees of the natural history museum and their respective remaining terms in office.

The Prime Minister: The names of the trustees of the natural history museum and their respective remaining terms in office are:

	Date
Sir Walter Bodmer FRS FRCPath *(Chairman)*	31 December 1993
Sir Owen Green	31 December 1995
Raymond John Carter	31 December 1995
Gerald M. Ronson	31 December 1991
Dr. Euan N. K. Clarkson FRSE	31 December 1992
Mrs. Jennifer d'Abo	31 December 1993
Professor Brian Follett	31 December 1993
Denys Henderson	31 December 1993
Professor Robert McCredie	31 December 1993
Professor John Harper	16 February 1996
Sir Anthony Laughton	7 February 1995

Forensic Evidence

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps to ensure that the methods and thoroughness of forensic evidence gathering employed following incidents in Northern Ireland are of the same standards as those employed at the recent incident in St. Albans.

The Prime Minister: All explosions in Northern Ireland which, like the incident at St. Albans, cause fatalities are subject to a level of forensic scientific examination which is commensurate with their particular nature and appropriate having regard to the circumstances in which they occur and to whatever security considerations may apply at the time.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his office since 1 April 1991.

The Prime Minister: No record is kept of the number of calls made to directory inquiries from my office.

RECHAR

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what bilateral discussions he is having on RECHAR and additionality and with whom.

The Prime Minister: None, but Ministers and officials of the Departments concerned have discussed the subject fully with the European Commission and with interested parties in the United Kingdom.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mrs. Maureen Paleschi

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made to repatriate Mrs. Maureen Paleschi from prison in Cairo.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to take every suitable opportunity to seek the early release of Mrs. Paleschi on humanitarian grounds. I have no progress to report at present.

EC Economic and Social Committee

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the British members of the economic and social committee of the European Community, indicating in each case which interests they are intended to represent.

Mr. Garel-Jones: British members of the economic and social committee are as follows:

Group I (Representing employers)	*Group II (Representing workers)*	*Group III (Representing various interest groups)*
Neville Beale	Campbell Christie	Wilfred Aspinall
Michael Bell	Peter Dawson	Jocelyn Barrow
John Little	Tom Jenkins	William Black
Kenneth Gardner	John Lyons	Angela Guillaume
Felix Kafka	Ada Maddocks	Robert Moreland
Michael Mobbs	William Morris	Sue Slipman
Ann Robinson	Roy Sanderson	Michael Strauss
John Whitworth	Alexander Smith	Andrew Tyrie

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff are encouraged to make economic use of the telephone.

Gibraltar (Human Rights)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he takes to ensure that residents of Gibraltar have their human rights protected under the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The European convention on human rights applies in full to Gibraltar and provides Gibraltarians with the right of individual petition in relation to the rights covered by the convention. Furthermore, Gibraltar's constitution contains a chapter setting out the fundamental rights and freedoms of Gibraltarians and provides for their enforcement through the courts.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Mrs. Pamela Dix of UK Families Flight 103 concerning the Lockerbie disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Ms. Pamela Dix has written three times to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State concerning the Lockerbie disaster. Ms. Dix wrote most recently on 4 November 1991 enclosing a copy of a status report by UK Families Flight 103. My right hon. Friend replied to Ms. Dix on 19 November.

Cambodia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 20 November, *Official Report*, columns *198-99*, what information he has regarding the current whereabouts and fate of the leadership of the site 8 camp.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that all but two of the members of the former site 8 leadership have returned

to refugee camps on the Thai/Cambodia border, 10 of them to site 8. The exact whereabouts of the others is uncertain, but we understand that the two who remain inside Cambodia are safe.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), of 18 November, *Official Report*, columns *52-56*, he will place in the Library copies of the reports of each of the UNSCOM visits to Iraq listed in his reply; if he will list by name and expertise each of the United Kingdom inspectors or technical experts involved in each UNSCOM visit; and if he will set out the new information provided to Her Majesty's Government by the UNSCOM inspection visits, subsequent to knowledge of the Iraqi nuclear programme as at 19 April 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* Reports of the IAEA nuclear inspections are already available in the House of Commons Library in the form of Security Council documents as follows: UNSCOM 1 and 4 in S/22788 of 15 July; UNSCOM 5 in S/22837 of 25 July; UNSCOM 6 in S/22986 of 28 August; UNSCOM 14 in S/23112 of 4 October and UNSCOM 16 in S/23122 of 8 October. We expect the report of UNSCOM 19 to be issued shortly. Reports of other inspections have not yet been made public.

United Kingdom nationals serving on the inspection teams have skills and expertise requested by the UN special commission and appropriate to the nature of the inspection for which they are provided. For reasons of personal security, I am not prepared to reveal their identities.

New information on Iraq's WMD programme is set out in the above documents and in the report submitted to the Security Council by the executive chairman of the special commission which is being made available in the House of Commons Library—document S/23165 of 25 October.

Algerian Nuclear Facilities

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he intends to make to the International Atomic Energy Agency to improve its surveillance of Algerian nuclear facilities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* The Algerian research reactor operating at Draria is already under safeguards and the Algerian Government have given a public guarantee that the nuclear reactor under construction at Ain Oussera will be subject to IAEA inspection. We welcome this assurance, and look to the Algerian Government to invite the IAEA to inspect Ain Oussera as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Corporate Governance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost to his Department of seconding staff to the Cadbury committee on corporate governance.

Mr. Leigh: There is no cost to the Department for the secondment of a member of its staff to the committee on the financial aspects of corporate governance.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how many occasions he has secured repayments of the costs of any investigations carried out by DTI inspectors, under section 439 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are seeking recovery under section 439(4) of the costs of the Animal Defence Society Limited.

Inspectors Reports

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's policy *(a)* on the timing of the release of one of its inspector's reports where the subject of the report is also the subject of a current trial and *(b)* on the relative timing of the release of an inspector's report to those mentioned in the report and to Parliament.

Mr. Lilley: My Department would not expect to publish a report where the subject of the report was also the subject of a current criminal trial. A copy of the report could, however, be made available to those affected by its contents in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act and against suitable undertakings of confidentiality from the recipients. The timing of such release would depend upon the reasons for the request for the report.

Reports are made available to Parliament on publication. It has been the practice of my Department to allow persons whose interests may be affected by the report, on request and on payment of the prescribed fee in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 1985, to have copies, against undertakings, shortly before the proposed date of publication.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those countries covered by Export Credits Guarantee Department provision.

Mr. Sainsbury: Some export credit insurance cover is currently available from the Export Credits Guarantee Department, including from the Insurance Services Group which is shortly to be privatised, for all but three countries —Iraq, Libya and Zambia.

BBC External Services

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline the arrangements made to co-ordinate the duties of the BBC external services and of the Export Credits Guarantee Department with respect to promotion of United Kingdom commercial interests.

Mr. Sainsbury: The BBC World Service and the Export Credits Guarantee Department are two separate organisation with separate aims and objectives. However, ECGD does keep the BBC World Service informed about its activities. There are no plans to co-ordinate more closely their respective roles.

Cumbria Action Team

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the proportion of the budget of the Cumbria action team allocated for *(a)* administration, *(b)* new work space in Copeland and *(c)* new factories in Copeland.

Mr. Leigh: On 13 June the Secretary of State announced a package of special measures for Barrow and West Cumbria. These included:

(i) The establishment of the Cumbria action team, with a special fund of up to £1 million to support local initiatives in the area. No money from this special budget has been allocated for administration.

(ii) A £15 million programme under which English Estates will provide new sites, factories and work space in Copeland and Furness. There is no formal allocation for Copeland, but we expect the programme to be roughly equal between the two areas.

RECHAR

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the European Commission to release the RECHAR programme for implementation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* This is a question for the Commission. I can make no prediction, but I hope that it will be released very soon.

ECGD Insurance Services Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) further to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *37*, what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of current Export Credit Guarantee Department staff who will be given additional paid leave after 1 December, pending transfer to other duties;

(2) how many existing Export Credits Guarantee Department staff will be retained after 1 December, on full pay with no duties pending early retirement with full civil service entitlement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* Management are still considering the most effective deployment of staff following the privatisation of the Insurance Services Group.

Cumbria

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he proposes for the improvements to communications recommended by his Department's consultants in their report, "Cumbria's Economy, Strategic Needs and Opportunities in the 1990s."

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 22 November 1991]:* Following my right hon. Friend's announcement of measures for West Cumbria and Furness on 13 June, the Cumbria action team was promptly established in the area with bases at Barrow and Cockermouth. The team has established close and regular links with business leaders, key local agencies and others concerned with the economic development of the area.

A steering group involving the regional directors of Government Departments has also been established to ensure effective liaison at senior level between Departments on issues concerning West Cumbria and Barrow. In addition to regular meetings between Departments, this group has held other meetings with representatives of key agencies in the area with a follow-up arranged for mid-December. I plan to be in Whitehaven on that occasion and to attend the meeting.

Cars (Recycling)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has to date on corporate projects to dismantle and recycle cars in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the remainder of European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* I am aware of a number of initiatives being taken with regard to the dismantling and recycling of motor cars. In the United Kingdom, for example, BMW (GB) Ltd. has announced a pilot recycling and disassembly scheme and the Rover Group has announced plans to undertake a programme of research with the Bird Group—one of the leading United Kingdom and European materials reclamation and recycling organisations—which aims to establish the optimum level of disassembly as well as standards covering a wide range of marques. I am also aware of the proposal for an industry steering group whose initial function would be to initiate action and to co-ordinate information on the range of projects being undertaken.

Elsewhere in Europe, we are aware that BMW—who are co-operating closely with other manufacturers—have a pilot disassembly plant at Landshut and have opened an operational recycling centre in Munich. Also in Germany, GM Europe—Opel Vauxhall—has initiated a programme with RED Darmstadt and Ford have started a vehicle dismantling plant at Cologne. In France, the PSA Group —Peugeot/Citroen—has established a joint project, near Lyon, with a scrap metal processor and a cement maker to remove pollutants, to recover metals, and to produce fuel pellets from the residues. The results from all of these projects will be applied in the United Kingdom.

Additionally on the European front, the European Commission —DGXI—has designated end-of-life vehicles as a priority waste stream and discussions will start next month on identifying the scale of the problem and ways in which it can be tackled.

Recycling is not new to the motor industry. About 75 per cent. of the material in the average car is already recovered and there is a long commercial tradition in the United Kingdom of recycling car batteries, of reconditioning engines, gear boxes and radiators and a variety of other used parts.

Regional Government

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Council of Ministers meeting on the regions on 18 and 19 November.

Mr. Leigh: I attended on these dates the informal meeting in the Hague of EC Ministers responsible for regional policy and physical planning. The meeting considered two subjects: the Community structural funds, and the Commission's reference document "Europe 2000, Outlook for the Development of the Community's Territory". As it was an informal meeting, not a Council, no formal conclusions were reached.

Ministers had a broad exchange of views on the implementation of the structural funds to date and on certain aspects of their future. The importance of proper evaluation of the effectiveness of the funds was recognised and several ideas for improving the efficiency of their administration were discussed. The principle of subsidiarity and its relevance to the operation of the funds was acknowledged; I and some others expressed our Governments' wish to be more fully responsible for determining the eligible areas for and the detailed uses of the funds. Both Ministers and the Commission felt that there should in future be fewer "Community initiatives", a type of grant scheme exemplified by RECHAR.

The reference document "Europe 2000" was generally welcomed, although I and others emphasised that it should not lead to any Community "spatial plan" contrary to the principle of subsidiarity. The Commission intends to carry out further studies. The intention of establishing a committee or working group, to facilitate exchange of information and experience on matters relevant to the Community dimension of "spatial development" in the member states, will be considered in detail at official level.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Channel 4 Commission on Education

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department supplied the Channel 4 commission on education with statistical information or comments on the performance of education in England and Wales.

Mr. Eggar: My Department did not supply the Channel 4 commission on education with statistical information or comments on the performance of education in England and Wales. It was, however, in contact with the makers of an accompanying television programme.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received a copy of the report of the Channel 4 commission on education; and what response he has made to the views expressed.

Mr. Eggar: A copy of the report of the Channel 4 commission on education was received by the Department on 22 October. I responded to the views expressed in a television debate on Channel 4 transmitted on 23 October.

Disabled Students

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to extend the system of mandatory and discretionary awards to students on courses of further or higher education whose disabilities or medical conditions oblige them to study on a part-time basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Education Act 1962 gives local education authorities the power to make discretionary awards to part-time students on courses of further or higher education, but restricts mandatory awards generally to designated full-time and sandwich higher education courses. The student support arrangements are kept under review. We have, however, no present plans for primary legislation to extend mandatory awards to part-time courses.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make special provision for people to have access to education or retraining if they become disabled after the age of 19 years through accident or illness.

Mr. Eggar: Existing education and training arrangements already provide for those who become disabled in adult life. Local education authorities' responsibilities towards disabled adults will be carried forward into the new further education structures under the Further and Higher Education Bill. Department of Employment schemes give priority access to people with disabilities.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure suitable transport to and from college for disabled students in further education who do not have access to public or private transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Further and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament, the provision of transport for disabled and other students in further education will continue to be the responsibility of local education authorities.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that students with special educational needs wishing to pursue further education receive a full and appropriate assessment of their needs; and if he will specify the methods by which their academic achievements will be acknowledged.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Further and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament the assessment of further education students' needs will continue to be a matter for the colleges. It would be inappropriate for the Government to specify the methods by which examining and awarding bodies assess the academic achievements of students with special educational needs. The Government expect those bodies to ensure that their assessment arrangements take account of the needs of students with special educational needs.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will extend the statutory age limit for entitlement to further education for students with special needs who need extra time to develop independence skills and to catch up academically with their able-bodied peers.

Mr. Eggar: There is no such statutory age limit. The duty to secure provision of further education applies to 16 to 18-year-olds and to adults of all ages. The Further and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament carries that duty over into the proposed new further education structures.

Official Journeys

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of official journeys to Bradford made by the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) during 1990 and the current year to the most recent practicable date and the total cost of rail fares for himself and civil servants together with the associated costs of meals and any other expenses.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have a strong commitment to promoting inner city regeneration. As Minister with special responsibility for Bradford and Leeds, it is invaluable for me to maintain personal contact with those involved in this vital process—including both Bradford city council and important private sector and partnership bodies such as the Bradford chamber of commerce, the Bradford and District training and enterprise council, the Bradford Breakthrough and the Keighley business forum, not to mention the many voluntary sector and community groups which are contributing to the development of new initiative and new partnerships in the district.

My many and frequent contacts with local people are also invaluable in steering the work of the Bradford and Leeds city action team and the Bradford task force which between them invest over £1·5 million a year in the city —and which seek to co-ordinate the impact of central Government programmes especially in the fields of environment, employment, training and enterprise. There is no substitute for seeing things personally and learning at first hand.

Since July 1990, when I became Minister of State, I have made 11 official visits to Bradford, nine by train. From the records currently available the total cost for myself and civil servants is as follows:

	£
a) Rail fares	1,692·58
b) Associated costs	285·85

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to give complete statistics of all directory inquiry calls made by departmental personnel. While telephone logging equipment is now installed at the Department's main offices in London and Darlington, it is not available at small outstations or the divisional and local offices of Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Data collected during October suggest that approximately 80 calls are made daily to directory inquiries from the Department's two principal sites.

Schools (Health and Safety)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on local education authority inspections of schools for health and safety.

Mr. Atkins: It falls to local education authorities to ensure that their inspection arrangements are appropriate for the discharge of both their statutory duties and wider responsibilities with regard to health and safety.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Rents

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's guidelines for rents of council homes in Lambeth in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Yeo: Guideline rents are the assumptions about each local housing authority's rental income used in the calculation of entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy. They are calculated by each authority in accordance with a formula determined annually by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. For 1992-93 my right hon. Friend has proposed that guideline rents should be increased by between £1·20 in low value areas to £4·50 in high value areas. If the proposals are confirmed, the Department estimates that Lambeth's guideline rent for 1992-93 is likely to be £30·39 a week. No decisions have been made about guideline rents for 1993-94.

Red Telephone Boxes

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria changes have taken place which has resulted in English Heritage listing an old-style red telephone box outside the London inn in Ivybridge, Devon, in 1988, but removing it from the list in 1991; and how many red public telephone boxes will remain in Ivybridge.

Mr. Yeo: The criteria for assessing traditional red telephone kiosks for listing have not changed since June 1987. The kiosk outside the London inn, Ivybridge, was rejected for listing on 24 June 1991, because it is not considered to fulfil the listing criteria. It had not previously been assessed for listing.

It is for British Telecom to decide how many red telephone kiosks are to remain in Ivybridge.

Council House Sales

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1981 which local authorities are spending their receipts from right-to-buy sales at the maximum permitted rate; what are the amounts; which local authorities are spending their receipts at less than the maximum permitted rate; what are the amounts they spend; and what are the amounts they could spend.

Mr. Yeo: Data on the spending of receipts from right-to-buy sales has not been collected from local authorities.

Liverpool Obstetric and Gynaecology Unit

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what grant aid has been sought through the Merseyside task force towards the cost of the proposed obstetric and gynaecology unit in Liverpool;

(2) what grants are being made through the Merseyside task force towards the costs of the proposed obstetric and gynaecology unit in Liverpool.

Mr. Key: None, but the Liverpool city action team has given grant support to the development team of Project Rosemary, of which the proposed new hospital would form a part. This support includes payment of the salary of a community development officer. The main costs of the new unit will be met by the district health authority under its usual allocations, details of which are a matter for the chairman of Mersey regional health authority, Sir Donald Wilson.

City Challenge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of grant the Government will be contributing to city challenge schemes; and what proportion local authorities will have to raise themselves.

Mr. Portillo: The proportion of grants contributed by local authorities and the Government in city challenge are as follows:

Urban Programme

For revenue projects grant will be available at 90 per cent. rather than 75 per cent.; the local authority will be expected to contribute 10 per cent. of approved costs.

For capital projects, grant will be available at 75 per cent. and supplementary credit approvals (SCAs) at 25 per cent.

Estate Action

For estate action projects there will be 100 per cent. SCA support.

Local Authority Derelict Land Grant

In respect of local authority derelict land grant projects, all city challenge areas will receive 100 per cent. support, in the form of 50 per cent. grant and 50 per cent. SCAs in Lewisham and Tower Hamlets and 100 per cent. grant elsewhere.

Non Local Authority Derelict Land Grant

Grant on approved expenditure on non local authority derelict land grant projects will be given at a rate of 50 per cent. in Lewisham and Tower Hamlets and 80 per cent. in other areas.

Private Sector Housing Renewal

City challenge support is available under section 132 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and for environmental works in renewal areas under section 96 of that Act. Grant will be paid on 90 per cent. of a local authority's eligible expenditure for group repair schemes and on 90 per cent. of the eligible expenditure incurred in carrying out environmental works in renewal areas; the local authority will be required to contribute the remaining 10 per cent.

City Grant

For city grant, grant will continue to be paid directly to developers and assessed on the deficit between project costs and project value.

Housing Corporation

For schemes funded by the Housing Corporation grant will be paid on mixed funded schemes and public funded schemes in 1992-93 at the appropriate rates for the area in accordance with Housing Corporation circular 33-91.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the funds for city challenge have been top-sliced from existing inner-city programmes.

Mr. Portillo: Yes; £82·5 million for 1992-93 has been top-sliced from the following programmes:

- Estate Action
- Urban Programme
- City Action Teams
- City Grant
- Derelict Land Grant
- Private Sector Housing Renewal
- Housing Corporation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will provide continuing revenue support to the city challenge schemes after the five year cut-off point.

Mr. Portillo: Revenue support for city challenge schemes will be provided for the period agreed in their action plans.

Police Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions a police authority has become insolvent in that its current expenditure in the current financial year exceeds its income; and what powers he has to deal with such an eventuality.

Mr. Key: No single-service police authority has reported to us that it has ended any year with a deficit. The management of its financial affairs, including dealing with any deficit, is a matter for each individual authority.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he or his predecessors have advised police authorities to run revenue deficits on the assurance of income in future years; and what powers he has to offer such assurances.

Mr. Key: None. We have no such power.

House Repossessions

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were repossessed by building societies in the first three quarters of 1991.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information is the number of properties taken into possession during the first half of 1991 by building societies and other members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders. This, with the corresponding information for earlier periods, appears in table 11 of the November 1991 edition of "Housing Finance", which is in the Library.

Council Tax

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide examples for council flats or two-bedroom terraced properties for the same areas as he provided in his press release of 19 November for a 1960s built three-bedroom semi-detached house.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing his estimate of the council tax bill payable and the community charge bill payable in 1991-92 for a couple living in *(a)* a 1960s built three-bedroom semi-detached house and *(b)* a 1960s built four-bedroom detached house for each English council.

Mr. Heseltine: I have today placed in the Library tables providing the information requested.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the addresses for each of the 1960s built three bedroom semi-detached houses used to illustrate comparison between the last rates bill, current poll tax bill and the future council tax bill published in a press release from his Department on 19 November 1991.

Mr. Key: The figures published on 19 November were based on estimates of value provided by the Valuation Office. These estimates relate to typical properties rather than actual addresses.

Nitrate Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 28 zones which are the subject of an action by the EC against the Government for failure to meet EC nitrate levels.

Mr. Baldry: The 28 zones covered by the European Commission's 1989 case against the United Kingdom, which is to be heard in the European Court on 27 November, are shown in the table, together with the date by which each will comply with the nitrate standard in the EC drinking water directive.

	Date by which to comply
Anglian Water	
Dessingham (2 sources)	[1]—
Docking	1991
Hunstanton	1991
Bowthorpe	1993
Hoveton (2 sources)	1992-1994
Moulton/Kennet	1993
Wisbech	1993
Immingham (2 zones)	1995
Harrowby (2 sources)	1992-1994
Barrow	1992
Binbrook	1992
Market Rasen	1992
Middle Rasen (2 zones)	1992
Sleaford (2 zones)	1994
Metheringham (2 zones)	1994
Barrowby	1994
Ely	[2]—
Severn Trent Water	
Oakley Farm	[2]—
Puleston Bridge	[2]—
Farnsfield	[2]—
Lilleshall	[2]—
Lee Valley Water Company	
Luton (Crescent Road)	1993
South Staffordshire Water Company	
Lichfield (5 sources)	[3]—
Trent Valley	[2]—

[1]— 1 source now complies/second 1994.
[2]— Now complies.
[3]— 1 source now complies/remainder 1993.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will agree to meet representatives of mobile home dwellers in Dorset; and if he will make a statement on his Department's current discussions on their circumstances.

Mr. Yeo: Consultants appointed by the Department carried out a research study into physical and social conditions on residential mobile home sites over the summer. We shall be publishing their report in the near future. We also intend to publish a consultation paper on future mobile homes policy, although no major changes to the Mobile Homes Act 1983 are contemplated. We shall be initiating discussions with representatives of mobile home residents and site owners at the appropriate time.

Homelessness

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what investigations and surveys he has undertaken in the past two years into the size and extent of the problem of people sleeping rough in snow or extreme cold outside London; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what inquiry he has made into the number of people who slept rough in snow or extreme cold in Leicester last winter.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has not undertaken any research into the number of people outside London sleeping rough during the last two winters. The most reliable estimate of the numbers sleeping rough outside London is in the 1991 OPCS census supplementary monitor on people sleeping rough, which was placed in the Library on 9 July. This reported that 33 people were sleeping rough on the streets of Leicester on the night of 21-22 April.

MINIS-12 Report

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what inquiries have been received by his Department since the start of October concerning *(a)* the content and *(b)* the availability of the MINIS-12 report for 1991.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* My Department has received only a handful of inquiries since the beginning of October about MINIS 12 returns. The returns were published in July and their content is a matter of public record. Copies were placed in the Library of the House and are available for purchase from my Department. Inquirers are referred to these sources as appropriate.

Incinerators

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the levels of pollution from each incinerator operating in England; and to what extent they comply with EC legislation.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* Information on levels of pollution from individual plant is not available. The European Community has set limits on emissions to air from municipal waste incinerators with which incinerators built since 1 December 1990 must comply now. Municipal waste incinerators with a capacity of 6 tonnes/hour or more in existence on that date have until 1 December 1996 to be brought up to the European standards.

SCOTLAND

Nuclear Power Plant, Torness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether spent nuclear fuel allocated to the dry storage facility planned for the Scottish nuclear power plant at Torness will be subject to the EC proposal for a Council directive (COM(90)328 final) amending EC directive 80/836/EURATOM.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The draft of EC directive COM(90)328, which is still being discussed by the Council of Ministers, relates to the control of shipments of nuclear material. The effect of any directive on any dry storage of spent fuel is therefore speculative. No formal application to construct spent fuel storage facilities at Torness is before the Secretary of State.

Children (Special Needs)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the education of children with disabilities or special needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Primary responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs lies with education authorities. It is their duty to make available for all children in their area adequate and efficient school education which must include provision for children with special educational needs. Additionally, for children and young people with pronounced, specific or complex special educational needs requiring continuing review, authorities have a duty to open a record of needs and to ensure that the provision they make provides fully for the needs described in that record.

Financial provision to enable authorities to carry out these duties is included in the aggregate external finance settlement.

Traffic Accidents (A1)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths and how many injuries have occurred as a result of road traffic accidents on the A1 road between Musselburgh and the English border in each of the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following table provides the information requested on road traffic accidents on the A1 road between the Dolphingstone interchange east of Musselburgh, and the English border. Information for 1991 is available centrally only up to June and is provisional.

Number of casualties on the A1 between Dolphingstone interchange and the English border by severity 1981-90, and to June 1991

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1981	7	36	77	120
1982	4	54	51	109
1983	8	35	46	89
1984	7	55	54	116
1985	7	52	73	132
1986	4	62	78	144
1987	12	43	66	121
1988	15	41	57	113
1989	7	46	75	128
1990	10	47	95	152
[1]1991	1	11	39	51

[1] January to June 1991 (provisional).

Road Crossings

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to provide local authorities with responsibility for roads with additional finance for the specific purpose of providing accessible and safe road crossings for people with mobility or visual impairments; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for local authorities to include projects for the provision of accessible and safe road crossings for people with mobility or visual impairments in their transport policies and programme documents and financial plans. These will then be taken fully into account in determining capital allocations. Local authorities have been given detailed guidance about the provision of facilities at pedestrian crossings for disabled and visually impaired people. It is for the authorities themselves to decide what priority should be given to providing these facilities and other road safety measures.

Lyme Disease

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the incidence of Lyme disease in the highlands of Scotland and in each of the other health board areas in each of the last three years; and what steps are being taken to prevent its spread.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lyme disease has been a notifiable disease in Scotland since January 1990. Information about its incidence in earlier years is not available. The number of notifications, by health board area, for 1990 and 1991, to 8 November, is as follows:

	1990	[1]*1991*
Ayrshire and Arran	1	2
Grampian	4	11
Greater Glasgow	2	2
Highland	3	2
Tayside	2	—

[1] To 8 November.

Lyme disease is transmitted from animals to man by the bite of the adult female tick. It is not a common condition in Scotland, but the notification requirements which have been introduced will enable careful monitoring of its incidence to be maintained.

RNIB Needs Survey

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *485*, whether he has yet received a copy of the RNIB needs survey on blind and partially sighted adults in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has now obtained a copy of this comprehensive report. He will consider its contents carefully in relation to planning and delivery of the wide range of services for blind and partially sighted people for which he is responsible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the current unemployment figures for the Kilmarnock and Loudoun district.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In October 1991, the latest month for which figures are available, there were 4,295 people unemployed in Kilmarnock and Loudoun district. This figure is given on the unadjusted basis.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest unemployment figures for Dundee and Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In October 1991, the latest month for which figures are available, there were 9,641 people unemployed in Dundee travel-to-work area and 220,396 in Scotland. The figures shown are given on the unadjusted basis.

Craigtoun Hospital

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of Craigtoun hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision shortly.

Cumbernauld High School

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth on 11 November, *Official Report*, column *381*, whether Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools have had discussions with Strathclyde regional council concerning the implementation of the recommendations made by the inspectorate in its report on Cumbernauld high school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* The implementation of the recommendations made in the published report following the inspection of Cumbernauld high school were discussed fully with the divisional education officer in May 1991 following the follow-up inspection, and have been the subject of further discussions. Progress was being made on all the issues raised in the published report, although the authority had been unable to respond immediately on those in relation to the replacement of windows and other maintenance, and decoration. That work has been phased. Window replacement is being undertaken in three phases with the second to be completed in 1992 and the remainder undertaken in the course of the financial year 1992-93. Early preparation for redecoration is under way and plans have been made to complete that in 1992-93.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth on 11 November, *Official Report*, column *381*, if he will outline those subject departments, or areas of weakness, at Cumbernauld high school which necessitated Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools to undertake a follow-up inspection of the school in January 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* In terms of Scottish Office Education Department circular No. 1095 a follow-up visit is paid to all schools inspected to determine the progress made by the authority and the school in responding to the recommendations made in the published report. The report on Cumbernauld high school made recommendations for action by both school management and the education authority. In relation to the former, action was suggested to be necessary to provide clearer statements of school policies and to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of these, to provide more differentiation of demand within courses to match the range of ability of pupils, and in relation to aspects of provision in history, technical education, home economics, music and computing. On the evidence of the follow-up visit, substantial progress was being made, with the support of the education authority's advisory service, to bring about improvements in all these areas.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the line of route of the M80 to Haggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether a decision has yet been reached on the line of route for the M80 from Haggs to Stepps; and when the work is likely to commence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* Over the past six months the road project team in the Scottish Office roads directorate managing the M80 Stepps-Haggs scheme has been heavily committed in a major review of the strategic trunk road network in north Lanarkshire. This review, together with essential preparatory work for the forthcoming M8 Newbridge to Edinburgh public inquiry, has regrettably delayed the consideration necessary to enable a decision to be made on the line of the M80 between Stepps and Haggs. It is hoped that formal presentations can be made to regional and district councils early in the new year and a decision taken thereafter. The date of a start of the works will depend on the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to declare a moratorium on new management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, pending a review of the system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* No.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations *(a)* the Scottish Office and *(b)* the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland have received from Lord Kimball on the need for management agreements in north-west Sutherland under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* Lord Kimball has served notices of intent under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to undertake agricultural, forestry and other operations. These proposals are being assessed by the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland which will decide whether management agreements should be offered under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the impact of management agreements, currently being negotiated, on the proposed budget of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* All matters affecting the funding requirements of Scottish Natural Heritage will be taken into account by my right hon. Friend in deciding the amount of the grant in aid which will be allocated.

DEFENCE

RAF Machrihanish

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future role of RAF Machrihanish;

(2) if he will make a statement on the use of facilities at RAF Machrihanish by United States armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Machrihanish is primarily established as a wartime forward operating base for NATO, including United States, maritime patrol aircraft. United States navy aircraft occasionally use the station for exercises. Additionally, the station accommodates a United States navy mobile mine assembly group and special warfare unit. There are no current plans to change this role.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been awarded for construction work at RAF Machrihanish during 1990-91; and what is their individual cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Contracts awarded in 1990-91 for construction work at RAF Machrihanish cover airfield paving, aviation fuel storage installations, an operational and administrative building, a range of accommodation buildings, a civil aviation terminal and a public road. These exclude minor works and have a cumulative value of £28 million—of which some £15 million falls to United States and NATO funds. It is not possible to give the costs of individual contracts for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many residential properties owned by his Ministry are in Scotland; and what is the current percentage rate of occupation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, MOD owned 6,361 houses and flats in Scotland, of which 5,107 were occupied representing 80 per cent. of the total stock. Many of the unoccupied properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly, and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, 372 properties were in the process of being sold.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many residential properties owned by his Ministry are in Fife; and what is the current percentage rate of occupation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the Ministry of Defence owned 1,436 houses and flats in Fife, of which 1,222 were occupied, representing 85 per cent. of the total stock. Many of the unoccupied properties were either undergoing major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, 108 properties were in the process of being sold.

Thurleigh Airfield

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consultations have taken place since the announcement of the closure of the airfield at Thurleigh, Bedfordshire between his Department and agencies and the local authorities in the county; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to discuss the terms of the proposals covering Thurleigh airfield with the local authorities involved before completing negotiations with United Parcel Services;

(3) if he will make it his policy to ensure that North Bedfordshire borough council is requested for planning permission for a change in use for Thurleigh airfield from military to civilian flying;

(4) how many applicants have approached his Department for authority to use the airfield at Thurleigh for *(a)* flying and purposes connected therewith, *(b)* commercial users, other than as an airport, *(c)* recreational purposes and *(d)* housing; and whether any negotiations have been completed;

(5) what account he takes in considering the future of Thurleigh airfield in Bedfordshire of *(a)* noise, *(b)* planning blight, *(c)* environmental despoliation and *(d)* loss of amenity.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since my announcement on 9 May of our intention to dispose of Thurleigh (Bedford) airfield on relocation of research and experimental flying to Boscombe Down, consultants acting on our behalf have held several discussions with Bedfordshire county and North Bedfordshire borough councils in the course of stage II of their study into disposal and marketing strategy. We anticipate a continuing, more detailed, dialogue, once the consultants' findings have been evaluated. We are not, in the meantime, in formal negotiation with either United Parcels Service or the 10 other commercial concerns which have discussed their informal interest in alternative use for the airfield site with our consultants.

In considering the disposal of Thurleigh airfield, our objective is to agree a way forward with the local authorities concerned that is consistent both with our duty to maximise the potential return from sale and with legitimate local environmental and infrastructure concerns, which it would be our intention to address in an environmental impact assessment. Any subsequent developments within the context of current planning legislation would be the subject of a formal submission to North Bedfordshire borough council.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on calls to directory inquiries from my Department is not held centrally and the number of such calls could be calculated only at disproportionate cost. Access to this service is restricted.

Staffordshire Regiment

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the record of the Staffordshire Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Staffordshire Regiment and its predecessors have a long and honourable history. They have served with distinction in campaigns from Guadaloupe in 1759 to the recent conflict in the Gulf. Full details are available in the Army List and regimental histories.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to maintain the Staffordshire regiment in its existing form.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the restructuring of the Army, the Staffordshire Regiment will amalgamate with the Cheshire Regiment in 1993. I am, however, confident that the traditions, identity and loyalties of both the Staffordshire Regiment and the Cheshire Regiment will be successfully carried forward into the new regiment.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the Director of Infantry's current guidelines on amalgamation of regiments in respect of the relative priority for amalgamation of those regiments which have already been amalgamated since 1945 and those which have not;

(2) if he will list the order of preference for amalgamation submitted by the Cheshire regiment to the Army board.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed basis on which the Army board came to its decisions about regimental amalgamations is an internal matter. The board took account of all relevant factors.

Service Medals

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to the striking of a humanitarian medal for service personnel; and when he expects to announce a design.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The possibility of an award for service personnel who take part in operations of a humanitarian nature is under consideration, but no decision has yet been taken.

South African Defence Material

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what oversight his Department maintains over the sale of South African-made defence material by companies based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury I have been asked to reply.

Exports of defence equipment are subject to control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order and a licence is required to export such goods to any destination.

HEALTH

West Middlesex University Hospital

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what building works costing more than £5 million he expects to be carried out at the West Middlesex University hospital during the next 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not received any approval-in-principle submissions from North West Thames and consequently no funding has yet been identified for any major scheme at West Middlesex. The regional health authority, however, recognises the case for investment there and is currently awaiting submission of the proposals being developed by the district.

South East Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the funds allocated for the current year per head of population to each health district within the South East Thames regional health area.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about the funds allocated to health districts is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. Peter Barker, the chairman of South East Thames regional health authority, for details.

Residential and Care Homes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the total number, by region, of inspectors of residential and care homes; what is the minimum number of annual inspections of these; and what further measures will be taken to maintain standards of care in residential and care homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the numbers of inspectors employed by local authorities is not held centrally. Authorities are required to inspect registered private and voluntary residential care homes at least twice a year.

The regulation of residential care, in which inspection plays a major part, safeguards the welfare of residents and helps uphold high standards. It is for this reason that over the last 12 months the Government have required local authorities to set up inspection units specifically to begin inspecting care homes in the public sector; have instituted arrangements allowing authorities to ask the police to check the antecedents of new proprietors and managers of homes; and, in regulations due to come into effect on 1 December, have introduced a requirement on applicants to provide details of criminal convictions, as well as to provide proof of identity on request.

We are also actively seeking to encourage improvements in the quality of life of residents in care homes. The social services inspectorate is publishing and promoting a series of documents on standards in homes with the generic title "Caring for Quality". Considerable progress has also been made in the caring in homes initiative, an action research programme which the Department is funding at a cost of some £2 million. The initiative is

working to promote good practice and enhancing residents' quality of life, drawing on recommendations made in the report "Residential Care: A Positive Choice". The final results will be made widely available next year. Copies of the existing publications are available in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the salaries, remuneration, pension entitlements and other benefits payable to *(a)* each chair or shadow chair of each national health service trust or proposed trust in the Northern region from 1 December, *(b)* members of each national health service trust or proposed trust in the northern region from 1 December and *(c)* when he proposes next to revise salaries and other remuneration for trust chairs and board members.

Mr. Dorrell: The chairmanship and non-executive directorships of NHS trusts are not salaried posts, although chairmen and non-executive directors receive remuneration for their services. Remuneration, though taxable, is not pensionable. The rates of remuneration from 1 December are given in table 1. Chairmen and directors are also entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances, the current rates of which are given in table 2. The timing of the next review of remuneration and allowances has yet to be decided.

Table 1
NHS Trust Chairmen's remuneration

	£
Band 1	19,285
Band 2	17,145
Band 3	15,125

Banding criteria

Turnover	
in excess of £50 million	Band 1
between £20-£50 million	Band 2
less than £20 million	Band 3

Note: Turnover means the unit's turnover for 1988-89.

Table 2
NHS trust chairmen, non executive directors, committee members and sub-committee members
Travelling and other allowances

	Current rates
1. *Public transport allowances (from 1 June 1990)*	20·1p
2. *Motor mileage allowance (from 1 April 1991)*	
a. Up to 1500cc	
Up to 7000 miles	35·7p
Over 7000 miles	13·0p
b. 1500cc to 2000cc	
Up to 7000 miles	37·0p
Over 7000 miles	15·0p
c. Over 2000cc	
Up to 7000 miles	39·0p
Over 7000 miles	17·0p
3. *Motor cycle allowance (from 1 April 1991)*	
a. Up to 125cc	
Up to 5000 miles	15·4p
Over 5000 miles	5·5p
b. Over 125cc	
Up to 5000 miles	24·7p
Over 5000 miles	8·1p
4. *Overnight absence allowance (from 1 August 1990)*	
Inner London	£98·70
Elsewhere	£85·85
5. *Day subsistence allowance (from 1 August 1991)*	
5-8 hours	£3·90
Over 8 hours	£8·60
Over 12 hours	£12·50

NHS Hospitals

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy for the amalgamation of NHS hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Hospital and community health services at a local level are the responsibility of regional and district health authorities, which should seek local agreement to significant changes in the provision of health services.

AIDS

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to mark World AIDS Day; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: World AIDS Day is a World Health Organisation initiative held on 1 December each year designed to expand and strengthen the worldwide effort to curb the spread of HIV infection and AIDS. The theme this year is "Sharing the Challenge", calling for a partnership of nations, groups, individuals and organisations from all walks of life to combat the pandemic.

As in previous years, we asked Mrs. Margaret Jay, director of the National AIDS Trust, to form a group to steer the United Kingdom response. The membership of the group has included people from the United Kingdom statutory, voluntary and media sectors. The day is being marked by many events throughout the United Kingdom.

On Friday 22 November I launched the Surrey and East Hampshire AIDSlink as a charity. In the week running up to World AIDS Day I am attending events in Bristol and in London. There will also be a preview of an exhibition of photographs of innovative local initiatives on HIV/AIDS. On 28 November the Chief Medical Officer and I will address the all-party parliamentary group on AIDS. My final World AIDS Day engagement will be to open a nursing conference on changing attitudes to AIDS in Cambridge on 2 December.

On World AIDS Day itself the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Social Services Inspector and the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer will attend an ecumenical service at Southwark cathedral. They will also visit people with HIV and AIDS and those who care for them, at the London Lighthouse and the Mildmay Mission hospital. These organisations have pioneered the provision of palliative care and support for people with HIV and AIDS. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will also visit London Lighthouse on 4 December.

We hope that the press, radio and television will help focus national attention on action to curb the spread of HIV infection and foster compassion and support for those already affected.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many non-haemophiliacs in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland who have contracted HIV infection as a result of contaminated NHS blood-tissue transfers *(a)* remain alive, *(b)* have developed AIDS and remain alive and *(c)* developed AIDS and have since died.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There have been 51 reports in England, Wales and Northern Ireland of HIV infection in people who received blood or tissue transfer in the United Kingdom. The number of infected persons thought to be alive is 26.

The number reported with AIDS is 27, of whom 22 are known to have died. We have no information on the cause of death.

NHS Residential Estate

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the report of the national health service residential estate commissioned from CSL Group Ltd.

Mr. Dorrell: CSL Group Ltd. was commissioned to examine the utilisation of national health service staff accommodation. Its report analyses NHS residential accommodation by type and number of units and recommends target rates for utilisation and availability. This will be incorporated in guidance about to be issued to the NHS. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Home Care Standards

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessments his Department has undertaken of standards of nursing home care provided by national health service hospitals;

(2) what consultations he has had with local health authorities over the standards of home care provided by national health service hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: Continuous nursing care may be provided in long-stay NHS hospital wards, community units, directly managed nurse-led units or through independent providers. It is for health authorities to decide the appropriate type and level of care and how best to secure it, taking account of local needs and priorities. Independent nursing homes are subject to the registration and inspection procedures laid down in part II of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Health authorities as purchasers of health care services are expected to ensure that their contracts include appropriate quality standards and to monitor the delivery of care. The Department is in continuous contact with the health service through the NHS management executive.

Nasogastric Feeding Tubes

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *409*, when he expects to complete his consideration of whether to make nasogastric feeding tubes available on general practitioner prescription.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A decision on whether to make nasogastric feeding tubes available on general practitioner prescribing depends on the resource implications for the family health services and consultations on the transfer of a service that is currently the responsibility of health authorities.

Dental Services

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has plans to introduce a charter for dental patients.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no such plans.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to review the working of the capitation system for dental treatment for children; and whether he will introduce an item of service payment formula within the capitation framework.

Mr. Dorrell: We keep all aspects of the working of the new dental contract under review. The capitation system includes provision for item of service payments. These are listed under item 41 of the fee scale in the "Statement of Dental Remuneration".

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been paid in pre-entry payments for children on a monthly basis in the period since the inception of the new dental contract.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the table.

Month/Year	*Payment (£)*
October 1990	336,560
November 1990	4,100,607
December 1990	6,928,169
January 1991	6,079,356
February 1991	6,579,365
March 1991	6,709,034
April 1991	6,541,420
May 1991	5,834,846
June 1991	5,301,253
July 1991	5,309,673
August 1991	4,587,857
September 1991	3,349,053
October 1991	4,138,035

Note: The figures refer to payments made under items 42(a) and 42(b) of the fee scale published in the "Statement of Dental Remuneration".

National Health Service News Management

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of establishing the national health service management executive news management unit; and what is its budget.

Mr. Dorrell: The NHS management executive does not have a news management unit.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce an additional option for accommodating children midway between secure accommodation and open children's homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: If a child needs to have his liberty restricted it should be in premises which can hold him safely and securely and in accordance with the statutory safeguards provided by section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

Radiotherapy, Sunderland

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average waiting time for patients needing radiotherapy treatment in Sunderland district health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally. At March 1991 there were no patients waiting for radiotherapy treatment in Sunderland district health authority.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has received from regional health authorities as a result of their being requested by his Department to notify the Department of approaches to regions from the hon. Member for Peckham about patients on waiting lists.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Mr. D. H. Bullock

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will investigate the case of the constituent of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston, Mr. D. H. Bullock, who was admitted to Broadgreen hospital, Liverpool on 25 September 1991, discharged on 9 October 1991, and re-admitted on 13 October 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a full report on this case, which concerns a patient who contracted legionnaires disease at the cardiothoracic centre, Liverpool. We are satisfied that the hospital took immediate action to both isolate the infection and to take the necessary measures in line with the two codes of practice issued by the Health and Safety Executive and this Department.

Healthy Eating Campaign

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance he has given the food industry and educators with regard to the healthy eating campaign running alongside the HEA publication "Enjoy Healthy Eating"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will issue additional advice to the food industry and educators as to the role they can play in working towards a healthier nation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched the COMA report on dietary reference values in July, he asked the Health Education Authority to take the lead in developing a healthy eating campaign. The booklet "Enjoy Healthy Eating", which was published on 5 November, a copy of which is available in the Library, represents the start of that campaign. Further nutrition education resources for both professionals and the public are being developed.

So far as the food industry is concerned, the Government maintain a constructive dialogue with it on issues such as food labelling and the production and marketing of healthy choices in food supplies.

In the context of the Green Paper "The Health of the Nation", the responses of those representing the food industry have given a positive welcome to the initiative and have signalled their intention to play a full and constructive role.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Only two months' information is kept on telephone calls from the Department. Since 16 September, 3,900 calls have been made to directory inquiries.

Psychiatric Facilities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the level of provision of medium secure psychiatric facilities in Wessex regional health authority; and whether there are any plans to develop them.

Mr. Dorrell: West Dorset health authority has been invited to co-ordinate the purchasing requirements of all the health authorities in Wessex for the provision of medium secure psychiatric facilities.

A decision will be taken about the nature, location and size of future provision, taking into consideration the recommendations emerging from the current national review of services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services.

Juveniles (Secure Accommodation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make assistance available to local authorities to meet revenue expenditure in repect of the provision of secure accommodation for juveniles.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Secure accommodation in community homes forms part of a range of residential facilities provided by local authorities for children they are looking after. The revenue costs of such accommodation fall to the providing local authority, which may recharge other local authorities making placements there. The local authority associations have an opportunity to express views on pressures that might lead to additional expenditure, or savings, on personal social services as part of the discussions leading to the annual local authority settlement.

Grant aid is available from central Government to meet the full capital cost of providing secure accommodation in community homes.

Patients Charter

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the cost of production and distribution of *(a)* the patients charter and *(b)* the summary of the patients charter.

Mr. Dorrell: The costs of the production and distribution of the patients charter and the summary of the patients charter were £200,000 and £1,400,000 respectively.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Credits

14. Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to report on the training credit pilot schemes.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend was delighted to be able to announce yesterday the names of the training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies that will be developing a second round of training credits schemes, to come into operation in April 1993. This second round of credit schemes will build on the experience of the existing training credit pilots and we hope to publish evaluation results from the first nine months of operating the pilots in the spring of 1992.

Unfair Dismissal

15. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to protect employees against unfair dismissal when they are trying to enforce a statutory right.

Mr. Forth: Employees who qualify can complain of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to amend the existing legislation.

17. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will amend the qualifying conditions for unfair dismissal for employees trying to enforce section 8 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

22. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to amend the qualifying period for unfair dismissal when employees are dismissed for trying to enforce a statutory right.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to amend the existing legislation.

Unemployment

16. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which are the latest figures for unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This month's rise in seasonally adjusted unemployment of 15,700 is the smallest since September 1990 and the third successive fall in the rate of increase. In Scotland, Wales and the Northern region seasonally adjusted unemployment fell in October 1991.

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in the United Kingdom on the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure published in November 1979.

Mr. Howard: On the seasonally adjusted, consistent basis, there were 2,472,900 unemployed people in October 1991 compared with 1,052,500 in October 1979.

Wages Councils

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement about the operation of the wages councils.

Mr. Forth: The wages councils have no permanent place in the labour market, but so long as they exist, the wages inspectorate will continue to enforce wages orders effectively.

Government Training Schemes

20. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are participating in Government training schemes now relative to 1979.

Mr. Howard: A total of 737,000 people entered Government training programmes in 1990-91 compared with 108,000 in 1978-79—a sevenfold increase.

Training and Enterprise Councils

21. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Jackson: All 82 training and enterprise councils are now operational and turning their ambitious plans into practical action to improve training and business services in every part of the country. The enthusiasm and commitment shown by the top business people leading the TEC initiative is without parallel and is laying a firm basis for the high-skill, high-productivity economy this country needs.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give information showing the differences between profiled and actual expenditure by each training and enterprise council/local enterprise company and area office for each of the training and enterprise councils/local enterprise companies five funding blocks in each region and for Great Britain in total in 1990-91 and the latest available period; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what were the differences between profiled targets and actual performance of training and enterprise councils/local enterprise companies and area offices for *(a)* youth training starts, *(b)* youth training non-vocational qualifications I and II, *(c)* youth training non-vocational qualifications III and IV, *(d)* employment training starts, *(e)* employment training positive outcomes and *(f)* enterprise allowance scheme starts, in each region and for Great Britain in total in 1990-91 and the latest available period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: It is not possible to provide the information requested. Profiles are produced for internal management information purposes only.

The part of the question that relates to local enterprise companies is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to answer.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many directors of training and enterprise councils are (i) men, (ii) women, (iii) from ethnic minority backgrounds and (iv) from the private sector; what information he has about from which industrial sectors directors with a private sector background come; and, of those non-private sector directors, how many are from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* local education authorities, *(c)* other educational organisations, *(d)* trade unions, *(e)* voluntary organisations, *(f)* ethnic minority organisations, *(g)* employers' associations and *(h)* others.

Mr. Jackson: The information available is shown in the table. Information on the industrial sector background of directors from the private sector is not held centrally.

Category	*Number of directors*
(i) Men	1,014
(ii) Women	122
(iii) Ethnic minority background[1]	40
(iv) Private sector	805
(v) Non-private sector directors local authorities	231

Category	Number of directors
of which;	
(a) Local authority	97
(b) Local Education Authority (not included in (a))	48
(c) Other educational organisation	27
(d) Trade Union	58
(e) Voluntary organisations	42
(f) Ethnic minority organisations	4
(g) Employer Association	11
(h) Others	44

[1]Based on information collected in June/July 1991: 12 Directors preferred not to state their ethnic origin.

Unemployment (North Tyneside)

23. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will announce his proposals to reduce young male unemployment in north Tyneside.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Service and Tyneside training and enterprise council deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people in north Tyneside, including young men. In particular, the Employment Service and Tyneside TEC, together with the local authority, other local bodies and residents, are involved in action to help the regeneration of the Meadow Well estate.

Wages Inspectorate

24. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to expand the wages inspectorate.

Mr. Forth: None. The wages inspectorate has adequate resources to enforce wages council orders effectively.

Textile Industry

25. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in the textile industry during the latest period for which figures are available; and what steps are being taken to prevent further losses.

Mr. Forth: The number of employees in employment in the textile industry in Great Britain decreased by 2,100 in the month to September 1991. The Government have created and will maintain a climate which encourages enterprise and diversification, so that industry as a whole remains competitive. It would be counter-productive to try to support any individual sector.

Cumbria TEC

26. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of Cumbria TEC to discuss its budget plans.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend spoke to all TEC chairmen in England including the chairman of Cumbria TEC on Wednesday 6 November immediately following the autumn statement, to inform them of the Department's budgets next year as they affect TECs.

Youth Training

27. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the number of trainees on YT schemes in the Bristol, South constituency.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that Avon training and enterprise council has supplied the hon. Member with the information requested.

The Government have guaranteed that all young people who are under 18 and not in full-time education or a job and are seeking training are offered, and if necessary re-offered, a suitable youth training place. The Government remain committed to ensuring that the YT guarantee is met and has ensured that adequate funding is available to do so.

Wage Rises

28. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research he has funded in his Department into the effect of wage rises on the level of employment.

Mr. Howard: The estimation of the effect of wage rises on employment is best dealt with by using a model which considers the economy as a whole. We therefore use results reported by the Treasury which indicate that a 1 per cent. rise in the average real wage lowers employment by about 110,000 to 220,000 overall.

My Department commissions much research on labour market issues and some projects may also shed light on the wage-employment relationship in particular sectors.

Services (Redundancies)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the participation of people leaving Her Majesty's forces in the full range of training and employment schemes which are made available for the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Department group does not collect statistical information about ex-HM forces members entering training schemes or participating in Employment Service programmes.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision including the levels of funding he is asking training and enterprise councils/local enterprise councils and the Employment Service to make available in 1991-92 and over the next three years to members of Her Majesty's forces to resettle into employment following "Options for Change"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Service's full range of programmes and services is available to forces personnel to help them resettle into employment. Additional funding was allocated to the Employment Service in 1991-92 to allow it to introduce new programmes for newly unemployed people. These programmes are particularly suited to the needs of forces personnel and comprise job review workshops, which help with careers advice, and jobsearch seminars to improve job hunting techniques. The Employment Service has a long tradition of helping

ex-forces personnel into employment and it is discussing with the Ministry of Defence ways in which this can be built on.

Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies will take account of the training and enterprise support needs of members of Her Majesty's forces seeking resettlement, as they will for any particular group. Ex-service personnel may enter employment training through a special eligibility route.

The proportion of training and enterprise budgets used to train ex-service personnel is the responsibility of individual training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies and is determined by local needs and priorities.

Disablement Resettlement Officers

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been on the caseloads of disablement resettlement officers in Great Britain and each standard region in each month since September 1990; how many interviews disablement resettlement officers have carried out in each of those months; what information he has on the outcomes of those interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Midwives

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many midwives were employed and registered as unemployed in each of the last four years.

Mr. Jackson: I regret that information is not available on midwives registered as unemployed.

The following information on midwives, including student midwives, employed in English NHS hospitals and community health services has been supplied by the Department of Health:

NHS midwifery staff in post at 30 September each year in England: whole-time equivalents

	Number
1987	23,300
1988	23,300
1989	22,900
1990	23,800

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the EC ministerial council meetings at which his Department has been or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. Jackson: I attended the Labour and Social Affairs Council in Brussels on 6 November. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State shall be attending the next Labour and Social Affairs Council in Brussels on 3 December.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what change there will be to the employment figures as a result of the redefinition of full-time work from 24 hours to 16 hours for those on income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: There will not be a change to the definition of full-time work in the employment series. It will remain at more than 30 hours per week, as it has for the last 45 years.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Jackson: The statistics available show that an average of 56 calls are made each day to directory inquiry services, from Employment Department and Employment Service headquarters buildings in Sheffield. No similar information is collected for other Employment Department group sites.

Employment Service

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress the Employment Service has made towards meeting the targets set out in its annual performance agreement for 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: We were informed by the chief executive of the Employment Service that in the period April to September 1991, the Employment Service placed a total of 710,000 unemployed people into jobs. Some 16·8 per cent. of these placings were long-term unemployed people, 2·4 per cent. were disabled and 34 per cent. were unemployed people in inner cities, against annual targets of 16, 2·4 and 34 per cent. respectively. To take account of the extra resources we have allocated to the Employment Service to help unemployed people, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced in June, we have decided to increase the ES target for 1991-92 for placing unemployed people from 1·3 million to 1·335 million.

Over the same period, details of new claims were input into the computer within six days of claim being made in 89·3 per cent. of cases, and the total value of correct payments of unemployment benefit was 96·4 per cent. of the total value of payments, against annual targets of 91 and 95·5 per cent. respectively. In addition, the number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with ES fraud inspectors was 24,450. In the light of my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement in August to allocate additional resources to this area of work, we have decided to increase the ES annual target of claims withdrawn following fraud investigation from 45,000 to 49,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 November 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Political Campaign Expenditure

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will meet the Charity Commissioners to discuss the expenditure of the Foundation for Business Responsibilities on political campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The trustees of the Foundation for Business Responsibilities have been invited by the Charity Commissioners to supply them with information as to the activities of the charity, its expenditure and receipts. I have asked the Charity Commissioners to send me a copy of the findings resulting from their inquiries.

Regina *v.* Amos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the advice on the release of defendants on bail following the decision in Regina *v.* Amos, at Newport on 8 November.

The Attorney-General: The criteria for the grant of bail is contained in the Bail Act 1976 and its application to individual cases is a matter for judicial determination by the relevant court having heard representations from both prosecution and defence. In the case to which the hon. Member refers the Crown prosecution service made representations that bail should be withheld.

ENVIRONMENT

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of the achievements of his Department since October 1990.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government introduced legislation to cut all headline community charges for 1991-92 by £140, and made various improvements in the community charge reduction scheme. It used its powers to protect community charge payers from excessive charges by capping 14 authorities and twice extended those powers through primary legislation. Legislation was also enacted to exempt caravan owners from payment of the standard community charge. In April the Government issued a consultation paper "A New Tax for Local Government", proposing the introduction of a council tax to replace the community charge. The Government introduced the Local Government Finance Bill which provides for the new tax to be introduced from 1 April 1993. It is working closely with the local authority associations and others to ensure that the arrangements for the new tax operate efficiently. Contracts for the allocation of all dwellings in England to bands of value are presently being let, and work will begin next month.

The Government continue to promote the efficiency of local authorities through the encouragement of competition in the provision of local services. To this end I have, on a number of occasions, used my powers to restrict local authorities' ability to carry out certain services using their own work forces where it appears that the local authority concerned has acted anti-competitively, or has failed to meet the required financial objective. The Government have published a consultation document "Competing for Quality—Competition in the Provision of Local Services", which sets out proposals for developing compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services. It has introduced the Local Government Bill which contains enabling powers so that the outcome of that consultation can be reflected in secondary legislation.

The Bill also provides for the establishment of a new local government commission to review the structure of local government in England area by area. It will consider the case for moving to a new structure involving unitary authorities outside London and the metropolitan areas. It will be required to have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interest of local communities. It will make recommendations to the Secretary of State who may implement them by order, subject to parliamentary approval. The Government have issued a consultation paper on the internal management of local authorities.

Good progress is being made in regenerating inner city areas under the action for cities initiative. In partnership with the private sector, substantial investment is taking place in new factories, housing, shopping centres, roads and other infrastructure, all aimed at improving the quality of life, and creating new employment and training opportunities. Since October 1990, the Government have announced increased resources for inner city regeneration totalling over £180 million, for the period 1991-92 to 1993-94.

The city challenge competition was launched in May with the aim of targeting priority areas to improve opportunity and the quality of regeneration. It offers local authorities, in partnership with businesses and the voluntary sector, the opportunity to tackle some of their worst economic, social and environmental conditions. The 11 successful city challenge pacemakers, announced on 31 July, will each receive £7·5 million a year for up to five years, from urban and housing programmes, to take forward their winning plans. These resources, together with the contributions by the local authorities and their private, voluntary and community partners, will be directed at achieving the comprehensive and lasting regeneration of the key localities.

The Government are continuing with their housing reforms, including deregulation of new private lettings, new housing association financial arrangements, and tenants choice. A growing number of local authorities are transferring or considering the transfer of housing stock to housing associations, so opening up their management to the disciplines and opportunities which the private sector can provide. More local authority tenants are continuing to exercise their right to buy their own homes, while the Government's three year, £96 million initiative continues to provide accommodation for rough sleepers in central London.

The Government also announced two new initiatives in July—a new approach to local authority housing capital allocations through competitive bidding which should improve the quality of public housing for tenants; and an

enhanced estate action programme for which an extra £350 million is to be made available over the next three years. The estate action initiative, together with housing action trusts, will increasingly concentrate resources on the most run-down local authority estates.

Following the publication of the environment White Paper at the end of September 1990, the Government have carried forward its strategy for the environment at home and abroad. A full account of progress over the first year was published in "This Common Inheritance: The First Year Report" Cm 1655 on 25 September 1991. A major achievement has been the creation of new and unique mechanisms within government, including "green Ministers" in each Department; two standing committees of Ministers on the environment; guidance on policy appraisal and on green housekeeping; the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment—whose first report was published in November 1991; and joint fora with the voluntary sector and local government.

In environmental protection, public access to information has remained a priority. The drinking water inspectorate published its first annual report in July 1991 showing the high quality of much of Britain's water. In April 1991 my Department issued through major food retailers a free popular guide to action the individual can take to protect the environment, "Wake Up to What You can do for the Environment"; 3,500,000 copies have so far been distributed. Air quality information is now widely available on weather forecasts, teletext and helplines and the anniversary report on the White Paper contained proposals to strengthen the system of public registers of information on major industrial emissions by the creation of aggregate registers on types and sources of emission.

In the two public expenditure rounds since the White Paper's publication, the Government have demonstrated their commitment to provide the resources needed to tackle environmental problems. Specific borrowing approvals have been available to local authorities for investment in new recycling plant and to clean up old tips. Staffing levels in the pollution inspectorate have increased by over 25 per cent. to meet the demands of integrated pollution control and my Department is supporting 41 projects under the new fund for the voluntary sector, the environmental grant fund, set up to promote White Paper objectives.

International work continues to be a major Government priority. Following the commitments made in the White Paper, the Government reached EC agreement in March 1991 to earlier dates for the phasing out of ozone depleting substances, bringing forward the date for CFCs to July 1997. Britain is playing a leading part in work towards agreements on climate change and biodiversity and in preparations for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. In October 1991, on behalf of the Government, I signed the international protocol which provides for protection of Antarctica for the next half century.

The Government are setting new standards in pollution control at home. Europe's first full system of integrated pollution control came into effect from 1 April 1991 under powers provided in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Act has also provided for tougher standards for waste disposal, increased fines for all types of pollution offenses and the creation of new expert groups to advise on standards. In October 1991, the Government published their consultation paper with proposals for a new single environment agency, controlling pollution to land, air and water.

The Rural Development Commission has continued its efforts to diversify the rural economy, concentrating on those rural development areas with the greatest needs and the rural coalfields of the east midlands. In October 1990 my Department announced agreement to the Countryside Commission's proposed initiative to create a new national Forest. A director has been appointed and a business plan is being prepared as the basis of considering how the proposal might best be carried forward. My Department also agreed in February this year to proposals by the Countryside Commission to prepare business plans for a further nine community forests near major towns and cities in England. A 39th area of outstanding natural beauty in England and Wales, the Blackdown hills, was established in June.

In June, the countryside stewardship scheme was launched. It seeks to encourage the improvement and extension of habitats which are of wildlife and landscape importance and which contribute to public enjoyment of the countryside. The scheme closed for applications on 31 October, by which time almost 1,200 valid applications had been received, well in excess of the target for the first year of between 600 and 900.

The Government have improved the delivery of nature conservation through the establishment of new country councils in place of the Nature Conservancy Council. English Nature, the successor body in England, will receive over £2 million of new money in the current year and a further increase of almost £4·2 million in 1992-93. In April, the protection given to wild birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was enhanced by the introduction of amended regulations controlling the registration of captive birds of prey and the trade in dead birds. With the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my Department launched a campaign to stamp out the illegal poisoning of birds of prey and other wildlife. In September an information package was introduced to deter the use of poison baits for predator control and to encourage the public to report instances of suspected abuse.

Following consultation, my Department announced in September additional safeguards for sites of special scientific interest—SSSIs—in England and Wales: they will no longer be able to be used for war games, motor sports and clay pigeon shooting unless the local authority has granted planning permission; local authorities will be required to consult English Nature or the Countryside Council for Wales about planning applications in areas adjacent to SSSIs; there will be a clearer policy on calling-in planning applications for determination by the Secretary of State; and additional advice has been given on when environmental assessment may be required in sites of national and international importance.

As a result of finalising the first quinquennial review of protected British wild animals and plants, three more species of animal have been given protection—the allis shad, the adder and the freshwater pearl mussel—bringing the total number of species of animal and plant given statutory protection to 207. My Department has given support to English Nature's "Recovery" programme which, in its first year, includes reintroduction, translocation, habitat management and research involving six endangered species. The Government took the lead in

preparing the text of an agreement to protect European bats under the Bonn convention on migratory species was finalised in Geneva in September 1991.

The Government have made an important contribution to the protection of internationally important habitats including the designation of five wetlands under the Ramsar convention and two special protection areas under the EC birds directive. They have also taken an active role in negotiations on the proposed EC habitats directive and the EC regulation on the importation of certain furs which was formally adopted earlier this month.

The Government have increased to £12 million a year the grant in aid to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, enabling it to build up investment funds in order to preserve historic properties, objects and collections for the nation. Within the past few weeks the fund has purchased Chastleton house in Oxfordshire and presented this 17th century mansion to the National Trust to preserve with its contents. The cathedral repair grant scheme, to be run by English Heritage, was launched in April, with funding of £11·5 million over three years.

The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 made important and widely welcomed reforms to planning law. It reforms the development plan system, requiring the extension of local plans to cover all areas, simplifying the procedures for the preparation and adoption of plans, and emphasising the importance of plans in development control. It makes planning procedures more efficient and effective, and in particular strengthens enforcement provisions. It provides more generous compensation, especially for home owners subject to compulsory purchase. Much of the Act has already been implemented; the rest will follow in the early part of next year.

The Government have continued to produce more accessible planning guidance to local authorities in the form of planning policy guidance notes and circulars on issues including planning and affordable housing, and sport and recreation. A conference on regional planning for the south-east was held in March.

My Department has completed a substantial revision of the building regulations, which includes improvements to the provisions on structural and fire safety, on protection from radon and methane gas and for disabled people; extends the requirements for sound insulation to flat conversions; and introduces a new requirement for safe glazing. I will be laying revised regulations before Parliament next month. The United Kingdom has become one of the first EC member states to implement the provisions of the construction products directive; the regulations come into force on 27 December this year. This will open the way for free trade in construction products throughout the European Community.

Solvents

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the units of production will be defined to which the exemption limits for *(a)* degreasing solvent and *(b)* paint solvent will be applied.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is perhaps referring to industrial coating and printing processes which have been prescribed for pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Exemption limits, expressed in terms of specified levels of annual usage of certain substances by processes concerned, are set out in section 6.5 of schedule I to the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991. These are to be interpreted in the light of rules set out in schedule 2 to the regulations.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the community charge would be in the current year in each local government area if local authorities were required to raise 20 per cent. of their costs from community charge payers.

Mr. Key: After taking into account community charge benefit, the community charge reduction scheme, and the income support element relating to community charges, the average community charge actually paid in England for 1991-92 is estimated to be £172. The income from this charge represents 15 per cent. of English local authorities' budgeted gross revenue expenditure.

If the proportion of income from community charges were to rise to 20 per cent., the average community charge for 1991-92 actually paid in England would increase to £229.

Average charges for individual areas are not available on this basis.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the total administrative costs of the *(a)* community charge and *(b)* proposed council tax.

Mr. Key: Local authorities in England have budgeted to spend £489 million on community charge collection in 1991-92. I would expect the council tax to cost no more than half that amount to collect.

Hertfordshire County Council

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in tabular form the expenditure of Hertfordshire county council in 1978-79 and for the latest available year in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms.

Mr. Key: The available information is as follows:

Hertfordshire County Council

	Expenditure[1]	
	Outturn 1980-81	*Budget estimate 1991-92*
	£ million	*£ million*
Cash terms	266·8	558·1
Constant price terms (1991-92 prices)	524·2	558·1

[1] In 1980-81 expenditure is total expenditure, while in 1991-92 expenditure is net revenue expenditure. These derive from two different systems of local government finance and are therefore not directly comparable. Comparable information is not available for earlier years on an individual authority basis.

Community Charge

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many individuals failed to pay all or some of their community charge in the Chelmsford local authority area in 1990-91; and what percentage this represents of the total number of charge payers in the Chelmsford local authority area;

(2) how many individuals failed to pay all or some of their community charge in the Chelmsford local authority area between *(a)* 1 April 1990 and 30 September 1990 and *(b)* 1 April 1991 and 30 September 1991; and what percentage these figures represent of the total number of charge payers in the Chelmsford local authority area;

(3) what was the total percentage amount of community charge paid in the Chelmsford local authority area in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The number of individuals in Chelmsford who failed to make any payment of community charge in 1990-91 was 3,500—3 per cent.of all individuals liable in Chelmsford. Information on individuals making partial payments is not available.

The authority reported the same figure—3,500—for the number of individuals who had failed to make any payment between 1 April 1990 and 30 September 1990. It should be noted that the number not making any payment can increase as well as decrease during the year, as it will include those who have recently become liable by moving into the area or becoming 18.

The figure for the corresponding period in 1991 is 7,188 —6 per cent. of chargepayers.

The authority had received 97 per cent. of its budgeted community charge income for 1990-91 by 30 March 1991.

Wild Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the EC has initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom Government concerning the rate of designation of special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Government officials have held meetings with representatives of the European Commission following the issue of a reasoned opinion concerning the rate of designation of special protection areas under the EC birds directive. The United Kingdom provided the commission with details of the protection afforded to SPAs and potential SPAs. The Government have identified a firm forward programme of sit designation, of which the recent designation of Rutland Water and the extension of Skokholm SPA to include the islands of Skomer and Middleholm is a part.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to designate the Humber estuary a special protection area under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds.

Mr. Baldry: The former Nature Conservancy Council's proposal for the designation of the Humber estuary as a special protection area for birds is under consideration within government.

Water Pollution

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to protect the water environment from pollution by dangerous substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Controls on discharges of dangerous substances to the water environment are exercised by the National Rivers Authority under the Water Act 1989 and by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Discharges must enable receiving waters to meet relevant environmental quality standards—EQSs. EQSs have already been set for 10 red list substances: proposals for EQSs for the remaining red list substances are set out in a consultation paper to be issued shortly, and copies of which I have placed in the Library today.

Local Government Commission

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will announce the chairman or chairwoman of the proposed new local government commission.

Mr. Heseltine: I am delighted to announce that Mr. John Banham, currently the director general of the CBI, is to be the chairman of the new local government commission when, subject to Parliament, it is set up next year.

Council House Sales

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings each local authority has sold under the right-to-buy legislation, or voluntarily, since 1979; and what percentage of the total local authority stock they represent.

Mr. Yeo: I have placed in the Library two tables giving available information on local authority sales up to June 1991. Table 1 shows year by year information for each local authority during the years 1979-80 to 1986-87. Table 2 shows year by year information for each local authority since 1886-87 together with cumulative figures since April 1979 and the proportion of their stock sold since April 1979.

Homelessness

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to extend to areas outside London the emergency measures for people sleeping rough in snow and extreme cold;

(2) what extra measures he intends to take this winter to provide help for homeless people sleeping rough in Leicester in snow or extreme cold.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* In 1991-92, the Government are providing just under £6 million in grants to voluntary organisations outside central London for 122 practical projects to prevent and relieve homelessness. Among those being funded is the Leicester night shelter project which last winter provided additional facilities and medical care during the worst of the cold weather. I understand that it plans to provide the same services this winter.

British Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the auction catalogue for the sale of property held by British Waterways on 21 November, together with a list of prices realised for any property sold.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* My Department does not have a copy of this catalogue. Nor will we receive details of the prices received until the board's annual accounts are submitted.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will bring forward proposals for a scheme to give owner-occupiers the option of converting from mortgage to rent to avoid home repossessions;

(2) if he will make it his policy to introduce a scheme for owner-occupiers who fall behind on mortgage payments to enable them to transfer their mortgages to shared ownership with local authorities.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* Local authorities may already acquire property from a defaulting borrower where they are themselves the lender and, if they choose, leave the former owner in place as a tenant. Authorities may also acquire property with a view to disposal including disposal of a shared ownership lease. Authorities may further provide resources to housing associations to enable them to purchase property so that the previous owner remains on shared ownership terms or as a tenant. Details of these arrangements and procedures are currently set out in schedule 3 to the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy Determination 1990.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* It is estimated that at present, around 2,000 calls a month are made to directory inquiries from DoE offices throughout the country.

Home Repossessions

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Council of Mortgage Lenders over the number of repossessed houses.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has been in frequent consultation with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. As a result of those continuing discussions, the CML has published statements of practice on the treatment of arrears, new arrangements have been announced on the payment of mortgage interest for borrowers eligible for income support and lenders, insurance companies and housing associations are arranging for empty property to be made available for families in need.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of (i) the number of visits made during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is as follows:

	(i)	*(ii)*	*(iii)*
Chancellor	2	2	2
Chief Secretary	0	0	0
Financial Secretary	1	1	0
Minister of State	0	0	0
Economic Secretary	0	0	0

Magazines (VAT)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *33*, whether the zero-rating of magazines, in addition to books, is safeguarded until at least December 1996.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Yes.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans further to encourage investment in North sea oil and gas projects.

Mr. Maples: Some future North sea projects may involve the landing of gas outside the United Kingdom, or its initial treatment or storage outside the United Kingdom or the United Kingdom continental shelf. At present, the petroleum revenue tax—PRT—and "ring fence" corporation tax—CT—rules do not cater for these situations. To ensure that these tax rules do not distort the economics of such investments, we propose bringing forward legislation in the next Finance Bill to take account of new developments of this kind. In particular PRT relief, and CT relief within the "ring fence", will be given for the cost of transporting oil or gas to the nearest reasonable place of delivery outside the United Kingdom; and relief for initial treatment and storage costs will similarly be extended to costs incurred outside the United Kingdom or the United Kingdom continental shelf. Relevant expenditure already incurred will qualify for this new relief.

A double charge to both PRT and gas levy could arise if gas were sold, under a new contract, from a reservoir which was previously exploited under a contract which pre-dated PRT and so was subject to gas levy instead. Although production under the new contract would be within the scope of PRT, gas levy would under the present law still be payable. To remove this unintended double charge, the proposed legislation will cancel gas levy when a PRT exempt gas contract which already contains a single fixed termination date comes to an end at that date, and gas from the reservoir begins to be sold under a new contract which is not exempt from PRT.

These changes should encourage companies to proceed with worthwhile and substantial North sea investments.

Public Services Survey

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *26*, when he intends to commission an opinion poll

to investigate public attitudes towards public services; and if he will indicate *(a)* how much he envisages the survey will cost, *(b)* how many members of the public are expected to be involved in the survey, *(c)* when he expects the questionnaire to be finalised, *(d)* when he expects the sampling and questioning to begin, *(e)* when he expects the survey to be completed and *(f)* when he expects the results to be published.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* I intend to commission an opinion survey before long. The details have not yet been finalised.

TRANSPORT

Registrar-General of Shipping

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff have been engaged at the Registrar General of Shipping's office in Cardiff to operate the sea fishing register.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the year to date 12 staff have been engaged in the operation of the British fishing vessel register.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much expenditure has been incurred in centralising the register of fishing vessels at the Registrar General of Shipping's office in Cardiff.

Mr. McLoughlin: The expenditure incurred in centralising the register of fishing vessels at the Registrar General of Shipping's office in Cardiff was £325,000.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the annual running costs of operating the sea fishing register at the Cardiff office of the Registrar General of Shipping.

Mr. McLoughlin: The annual running costs of operating the British fishing vessel register at the Cardiff office of the Registrar General of Shipping in the year 1990-91 was £315,000.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the existing capacity on channel tunnel rail routes; and what estimates he has made of total domestic passenger traffic by the year 2005.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to British Rail's route comparison report, a copy of which is in the Library. Section 6.2.4 of the report presents details of capacity on existing lines between the channel tunnel and London. The report also describes BR's approach to forecasting domestic passenger demand and the conclusions it draws.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is still his intention that the whole easterly channel tunnel rail link route will be brought up to the same stage of detail and development as the southerly route by July 1992.

Mr. Freeman: No deadline has been set for developing the easterly route to the stage at which it can be published for public consultation and safeguarding. However, I confirm that British Rail still expects the work to take about nine months once the framework and the mapping base for it have been established.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in full the details of the Ove Arup and Rail Europe channel tunnel high-speed rail route proposals.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the Ove Arup and Rail Europe proposals are included in the reports published by British Rail on the comparative appraisal of the route options; copies have been placed in the Library. British Rail does not intend publishing other material since this is based on commercially confidential information.

Parking Control

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance his Department has issued on the number of types of parking control that may apply in London boroughs.

Mr. Chope: A wide range of parking control systems is available to local authorities under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The main systems and methods of payment are set out in a discussion document "Paying for Parking" issued by the Department last year and circulated to all local authorities in England.

Guidance is also available in "Roads and Traffic in Urban Areas"—1987—and "Highways and Traffic Management in London"—1985—both of which are available from HMSO.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many separate types of parking control he has authorised in the London boroughs of *(a)* Camden and *(b)* Wandsworth; and what information he has on the types of parking control in operation in each of those boroughs.

Mr. Chope: London boroughs have direct responsibility for the parking schemes they introduce. There is no systematic collection of data by the Department on controls operating in the boroughs. In the last three years, special approvals of parking equipment have been given in connection with schemes in Camden and Wandsworth as follows:

22 October 1990
Special approval for electronic parking meters in London borough of Camden.
22 November 1991
Special approval for Hampstead parking vouchers (London borough of Camden)
2 March 1990
Special approval for electronic parking meter in London borough of Wandsworth.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests his Department has received from the London borough of Camden for approval of parking control schemes since January 1990; and what response his Department has made.

Mr. Chope: Generally, the Department's approval of parking control schemes is only required in respect of special approval for parking equipment, including vouchers, and any related special authorisation of non-prescribed traffic signs.

The only special approvals for parking equipment issued to Camden in the last three years have been those referred to today in my previous answer to my hon. Friend.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all motorway service areas located within primarily residential areas, those located within a radius of half a mile from residential areas and those within a radius of one mile.

Mr. Chope: This information is not readily available in the form requested. I will write to my hon. Friend.

East Coast Line Electrification

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the faults that have occurred with the system since the introduction of the east coast main line electrification, the reason for each fault and the safety implications.

Mr. Freeman: Public services on the whole of the newly electrified east coast main line commenced on 8 July 1991. Since then, BR has formally reported one failure of the electrification equipment. This occurred at Portobello on 29 August, when a return conductor on the overhead line equipment—OLE—expanded in the heat, causing a short circuit. There was no danger to the public or to railway staff.

There was another failure on 18 November, between Stevenage and Hitchin. I understand from the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate that a part of the OLE broke, and the wire carrying the traction current was struck by a diesel train. Half a mile of the OLE was pulled down. The current was automatically cut off and again, there was no danger.

Trust Ports

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the timetables for each of the trust ports seeking privatisation; whether he expects the timetables to be adhered to; what obstacles to privatisation remain; and if he will set them out in a deposited paper in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: The proposed timetables for each of those trust port authorities at present seeking privatisation under the Ports Act 1991 are as follows:

(i) *Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority:*

28 November 1991—closing date for final bids.

(ii) *Medway Ports Authority:*

20 December 1991—closing date for indicative bids.
3 January 1992—shortlisting of final bidders.
14 February 1992—closing date for final bids.

(iii) *Clyde Ports Authority:*

13 December 1991—closing date for representations on transfer scheme under section 9(6) of the Act.
10 January 1992—closing date for indicative bids.
17 January 1992—shortlisting of final bidders.
14 February 1992—closing date for final bids.

(iv) *Port of London Authority (for Port of Tilbury):*

6 January 1992—closing date for indicative bids.
13 January 1992—shortlisting of final bidders.
17 February 1992—closing date for final bids.

Except where the timing is shown as being dependent on section 9(6) of the Act, the above dates represent in each case the best estimate by the port authority concerned of the main stages in their privatisation process and may be subject to change due to unforeseen events.

When each sale is finalised will depend on how quickly each port authority is able to make its recommendation to the Secretary of State as to the successful bidder and how quickly the Secretary of State is able to reach a decision on that recommendation.

It will be necessary for an order approved by a resolution of the House providing for a levy on disposals of land under section 17(8) of the Act to become effective before an individual privatisation, other than that of the port of Tilbury, can be completed. A draft of this order will be laid before the House very shortly.

Road Improvements (Southampton)

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to update the eastern dual carriageway to full motorway standards between the M27 and Eastern docks, Southampton; and what is the timescale.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* The approach roads from the M27 and M271 to the Eastern docks are roads for which Hampshire county council is the highway authority. I understand that the county council is planning some improvements but that these do not involve any upgrading to motorway standards.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Action for Community Employment

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the most recent information he has on the destination of people who leave Action for Community Employment and the job training programme; how many leavers *(a)* got jobs *(b)* became unemployed or *(c)* went on to further training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The most recent survey of the destinations of participants leaving the Action for Community Employment—ACE—programme was carried out for the year 1990. The survey was based upon a sample of 1,000 ACE leavers and revealed that: 31·4 per cent. of participants found work; 63·7 per cent. of participants became unemployed; and 4·9 per cent. of participants took up further training or entered further education.

The most recent information available on the destination of participants leaving the job training programme is for the period 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 and is as follows:

Destinations	*Number of People*
Found Work	1,542
Unemployed	1,432
Further Education	54
Further Training	140
Not Known	574

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many unemployed people have been referred to restart courses since January 1991; how many of them were unemployed for over two years; how many attended and completed the course; what were the outcomes of the participants; and how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the restart course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Restart courses were discontinued in Northern Ireland in March 1989.

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in 1990-91 and since April 1991 have joined job clubs; how many have left; how many leavers got jobs; and how many entered another positive outcome.

Mr. Needham: In 1990-91 a total of 3,674 people joined job clubs; 3,033 have left, 1,640 got jobs and there were 848 other positive outcomes. In the period April to October 1991 a total of 2,346 people joined job clubs; 1,914 have left, 1,034 got jobs and there were 563 other positive outcomes. Separate figures for men and women are not available.

Housing Executive

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions in the financial year 1990-91 grant applications to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive were refused on the ground that the contractor proposed to carry out the work was not on the Executive's approved list of contractors; in how many cases the applicant was informed that an alternative contractor could qualify; and what was the average delay in processing claims using the new contractor.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chairman has advised me that information about such cases is not collected and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Since the introduction of the warranted builders scheme in August 1987 the number of refusals arising from proposed use of a non-warranted builder have been few. During the past year approximately 12 cases received exceptional approval for the use of non-warranted builders.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many applications for grant aid to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which are still under consideration, were submitted to each office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive prior to *(a)* 1 January 1991, *(b)* 1 October 1990, *(c)* 1 July 1991, *(d)* 1 April 1990 and *(e)* 1 January 1990, respectively;

(2) how many grant applications were referred for an occupational therapist's report by each office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each month since 1988.

Mr. Needham: These questions are for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chairman has advised me that the information sought is not recorded in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average time lapse between the referral of a grant application, by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, to an occupational therapist, and the receipt by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of recommendations of the occupational therapist.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chairman has advised me that the average response time varies by region as follows:

Belfast—11 months (although east and south Belfast average only 2 months)
North East—2-3 months
West—11 months (Derry substantially longer than Omagh and Enniskillen)
South—4-5 months
South East—3 months

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average time lapse between receipt of an application for grant aid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the initial house inspection by a grants officer.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chairman has advised me that the average time lapse between receipt of an application and initial inspection is currently nine weeks.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for *(a)* intermediate grant, *(b)* conversion grant, *(c)* repair grant and *(d)* improvement grant, respectively, were (i) received and (ii) approved by each office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each month since 1988.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but the chairman has advised me that

in relation to the numbers of applications received this information is not available in the form requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Details of the numbers of applications approved have been placed in the Library.

Water Pollution

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to protect the water environment from pollution by dangerous substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Controls on discharge of dangerous substances to the water environment are exercised by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Discharges must enable receiving waters to meet relevant environmental quality standards—EQSs. Environmental quality standards for a number of red list substances are already in use in Northern Ireland: proposals for environmental quality standards for the remaining red list substances are set out in a consultation paper to be issued shortly, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Emergency Provisions Act

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements he has made to review the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Mr. Brooke: Viscount Colville of Culross, who has carried out an annual review of emergency legislation in previous years, has accepted my invitation to prepare a report on the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. As with the former reviews, the intention is that the report should enable both Houses of Parliament to discharge effectively their responsibility to scrutinise the operation of the Act on the occasion of the annual debates on the continuance orders, and to determine whether any of the Act's temporary provisions could be allowed to lapse.

As the temporary provisions of the Act will lapse on 15 June 1992 unless continued in force by order, I have asked Viscount Colville to submit his report by the beginning of April next year.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 6 November.

Mr. Brooke: In his autumn statement on 6 November, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the allocations to individual programmes shown in the following table: copies of a more detailed statement have been placed in the Library. These allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals in response to local needs and circumstances.

Programme	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order, Protective and Miscellaneous Services	832	880	920
Northern Ireland Departments:			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Services and Support	119	120	130
Industry Trade and Employment	445	440	440
Energy	5	0	10
Transport	173	180	190
Housing	249	260	270
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	199	230	240
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	37	40	40
Education	1,211	1,270	1,330
Health and Personal Social Services	1,242	1,290	1,340
Social Security Administration	150	150	150
Other Public Services	90	90	100
Total Northern Ireland Block (excluding Social Security Benefits)	4,754	4,970	5,150
Social Security Benefits	2,177	2,350	2,490
Total Northern Ireland Block	6,931	7,320	7,650
National Agriculture and Fishery Support	94	90	90
Total Northern Ireland Programme	7,025	7,410	7,740

Notes:

(1) Figures are rounded to nearest £1 million for 1992-93 and to the nearest £10 million for 1993-94 and 1994-95 (thus "£0 million" means "less than £5 million"). Figures may not sum to totals due to roundings.

(2) The PE plans for 1992-93 onwards have been adjusted to reflect Government's intention that NIE should be privatised early in 1992.

(3) The planning figures for 1992-93 form the basis for preparation by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office of Main Estimates for the coming year. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Regional Committee

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any estimate of the number of places Scotland will be allocated from the United Kingdom share of 24 seats on the proposed regional committee as part of the political union draft treaty terms.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The arrangements for selecting members of the proposed new committee of the regions will be for member states to decide. The distribution of United Kingdom places will be considered when the final outcome of the negotiations is known.

Military Equipment Sales (Russia)

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next meets the President of the Russian Republic, if he will discuss the proposals to authorise individual defence equipment factories located within the Republic to sell weapons and other military equipment on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to meet President Yeltsin in the immediate future. The Russian republic has the right to export weapons. We should expect it to abide by the Soviet Union's international obligations and guidelines on conventional arms exports agreed by the permanent members of the Security Council at their meeting in London on 17-18 October. These guidelines include observance of restraint and assessment of recipient countries' needs for legitimate self-defence.

European Community Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the EC ministerial council meetings at which his Department has or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have attended, or will be attending the following Council meetings:

Foreign Affairs Councils on 4 November, 2 and 16 December;
and European Council on 9 and 10 December.

They are also attending the following additional ministerial meetings:

Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union on 4 and 12 and 13 November;
and 2 and 3 December;
Ad hoc European political co-operation meeting on 8 November; and
Inter-institutional meeting with the European Parliament on political union on 5 November.

I make a written statement on the first working day of each month, forecasting all European Community Council meetings for that month and listing the items to be discussed. A copy of this statement is placed in the Library of the House.

Baltic States

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he is having with the German Government on the establishment of joint embassies to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not having discussions with the German Government on the establishment of joint embassies in the Baltic states. The possibility of co-locating premises with the Germans or other diplomatic missions will be examined on the basis of practical factors. Following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the Baltic states on 6 September, we established an embasssy in each Baltic state in early October. Germany has established its own embassies. Our embassies keep in touch with their EC counterparts and other diplomatic missions on administrative matters and have been co-operating closely.

There are differing circumstances in each country. In Estonia, our embassy is currently renting temporary office space from the German embassy while both look for permanent premises. In Latvia there are former British and German embassy premises to which both countries may return. In Lithuania, the British and German embassies are co-operating with each other and other missions in the difficult search for suitable accommodation.

CSCE

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent CSCE seminar in Oslo; and if he will place a copy of the concluding document in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The CSCE seminar of experts on democratic institutions, held in Oslo from 4 to 15 November, provided a useful opportunity to experts in this field to make contacts and to exchange views. The concluding document, a copy of which is being placed in the Library, contains suggestions made by the experts which will be considered at the Helsinki follow-up meeting. It also recognises the important role which has been played, and will continue to be played, by the Council of Europe in the provision of expertise on democratic institutions.

British Citizens, Abu Dhabi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of British citizens in Abu Dhabi who have had their passports confiscated in connection with BCCI; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's embassy at Abu Dhabi has been assured by the court receiver, most recently on 25 November 1991, that passports of all but a few British mationals have now been released and can be collected by their holders. The embassy has asked the court receiver for a list of names of those whose passports are not to be released.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received from British citizens in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received no representations from British citizens in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the British ambassador in the United Arab Emirates was first informed of the situation of the British citizens in Abu Dhabi whose passports are being withheld from them by the BCCI court receivers; what information was received; and what action was then taken.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A small number of former BCCI employees approached Her Majesty's embassy in Abu Dhabi as early as September 1991. A few individuals asked in late October and November for advice on how to recover their passports. The embassy undertook to find out why the passports could not be released. On 18 November 1991 the court receiver gave instructions that passports should be released in all but a small number of cases. These relate to individuals who have major liabilities to the bank and whose situation is being studied on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protest has been made by the Foreign Office to the Abu Dhabi Government about British citizens detained in connection with BCCI; and what has been the response.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The matter of consular access was raised with the United Arab Emirates by Her Majesty's

embassy in Abu Dhabi on 9 September 1991, and various times thereafter. My hon. Friend, the Minister of State, raised the question of consular access to the detainees with the United Arab Emirates deputy Prime Minister on 28 October 1991. Consular access was granted on 31 October 1991.

The embassy in Abu Dhabi has been seeking ways of overcoming administrative obstacles facing those who are not in detention but have not been able to leave. Passports and air tickets have now been made available to the majority of those who wish to leave, and arrangements made for the shipping of their personal effects.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions the British ambassador and his staff have visited those detained in Abu Dhabi; what representations were made by them; and what action is being taken to secure their release.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following representations by Her Majesty's ambassador at Abu Dhabi and his staff, Her Majesty's consul was permitted to see the detainees on 31 October 1991. Their release will depend on the due process and practice of Abu Dhabi law.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what explanation has been given by the Abu Dhabi authorities as to why the passports of the British citizens detained in Abu Dhabi were taken from them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is common practice in many countries for employers to hold passports. In the case of BCCI employees, the authorities kept employees' passports while they investigated their financial position. Instructions have now been given for all but a small number to be released.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japanese Investment

18. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's share of Japanese investment into the European Community.

35. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's share of Japanese investment into the European Community.

Mr. Leigh: According to information published by the Japanese Ministry of Finance, the United Kingdom has 39 per cent. of the stock of Japanese investment in the European Community.

RECHAR Grants

19. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the European Commission's refusal to provide funds for RECHAR grants in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: The Commission's objection is an involved one about the "additionality" of the United Kingdom expenditure to match the RECHAR grants. Although under no obligation to do so, the United Kingdom has made provision for additional public expenditure. The Commission is misrepresenting the position.

Government-Industry Contacts

20. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will meet regularly with business men, to enable his Department to maintain a two-way channel of communication between Government and industry.

Mr. Lilley: I have regular meetings with business people and will continue to do so.

Social Charter

21. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from industrialists in support of the social charter.

Mr. Lilley: I have received none.

Film Industry

23. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to propose any new initiatives to boost investment in the film industry.

Mr. Leigh: We are waiting for the report of the working party which is looking at ways of increasing private sector investment in film production.

Business Taxation

24. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from industrialists about the level of taxation on business.

Mr. Lilley: I receive a wide range of representations from industrialists about business taxation. Industry welcomed the 2 per cent. cut in the main rate of corporation tax announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget statement. And it welcomes the fact that we have the lowest rate of corporation tax in both the EC and the G7.

Telecommunications

25. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the operation of public purchasing directives in the telecommunications sector.

Mr. Redwood: The directives on public purchasing are part of the Community's single market programme. The supplies directive requires Government Departments, local authorities and certain other public bodies to award contracts above a certain threshold in value terms—currently £132,000 for regional and local government and £88,500 for central Government—in accordance with procedures designed to secure the non-discriminatory treatment of suppliers, including those supplying telecommunications equipment.

The utilities directive will apply from 1 January 1993 similar procedures to the procurement practices of entities, including those in the private sector, operating in the telecommunications, water, energy and transport sectors.

26. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the citizens charter as it relates to telecommunications customers.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of representations warmly welcoming the Government's policy, as set out in the citizens charter, for enabling new standards of service to be set for the benefit of telecommunications customers.

Manufacturing Industry

27. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lilley: I meet the president and other representatives of the CBI regularly to discuss manufacturing industry and other issues of mutual interest.

28. **Dr. Kumar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to increase Government support to manufacturing industry.

Mr. Leigh: The Government support manufacturing industry by pursuing policies aimed at fostering a competitive environment, encouraging innovation, restoring incentives and, above all, defeating inflation.

Securities and Investments Board

29. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss its work and remit.

Mr. Redwood: I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Industrial Policy

30. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the east midlands regional Confederation of British Industry to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of business matters. I last met regional CBI representatives when I attended the CBI's national conference on 4 November 1991 and the Minister for Corporate Affairs met the vice-chairman of the east midlands regional CBI in Nottingham on Friday 22 November.

34. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of business matters.

Manufacturing Investment

31. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received about manufacturing investment.

Mr. Lilley: I receive a great deal of correspondence relating to manufacturing investment. The latest figures show that the fall in manufacturing investment has halted. In the third quarter of 1991, manufacturing investment was 2 per cent. higher than in the previous quarter, and over one third higher than 10 years earlier.

Liquidations

32. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many United Kingdom firms have gone into liquidation during the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The numbers of company liquidations due to insolvency in the United Kingdom in the 12 months to June 1991 were:

	Number
England and Wales	19,337
Scotland	574
Northern Ireland	211

I will write to the hon. Gentleman to provide further information when the official insolvency statistics for the third quarter are published on 29 November.

Trade Statistics

33. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for trade between *(a)* Germany and the United Kingdom and *(b)* Japan and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

Eastern Europe

36. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on development of British trading links with eastern Europe.

Mr. Sainsbury: British trading links with eastern Europe have developed in a number of welcome ways. At Government level we took the lead in bringing about last week's initialling of association agreements between the EC and Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland; we have also opened three new diplomatic posts in the Baltic republics and are establishing consulates-general in Kiev and St. Petersburg.

EC Competition Policy

37. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan to discuss European competition policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend and I meet Sir Leon Brittan regularly, to discuss a wide range of issues.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his plans for the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following the privatisation of its insurance services business, the ECGD will continue to provide credit insurance support and export finance facilities for project exporters.

Auditor Monitoring

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which the public would have access to the results of auditor monitoring as carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: No. The recognised supervisory bodies are considering the publication of an annual report giving details of their monitoring of auditors. The bodies propose in any case to announce decisions to withdraw registration from a firm, whether resulting from monitoring activities or otherwise.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which the auditing firms criticised in his Department's inspectors' report would be required to meet a portion of the cost of the investigation.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation.

Ernst and Young

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, since his Department's inspectors' criticisms of Ernst and Young in reports relating to Sound Diffusion, Milbury and Rotaprint, he has received any assurance that the firm has raised its standards.

Mr. Redwood: Copies of the reports to which the hon. Member refers have been forwarded to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales as the relevant professional body. The institute has referred one of the reports to the joint disciplinary scheme as giving rise to a question of public concern. All the reports are still under consideration.

Rotaprint

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to ask Ernst and Young to bear part of the costs of the inspectors' inquiry into Rotaprint.

Mr. Redwood: No. My right hon. Friend has no powers to do so.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry further to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *115*, on how many occasions the firm has been criticised in reports by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors.

Mr. Redwood: Five reports of Companies Act inspectors published since 1 January 1988 contain criticisms of the firms which now form Ernst and Young.

Consumer Credit

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the licence fees for consumer credit and ancillary businesses.

Mr. Leigh: No. The licence fees for consumer credit and ancillary credit business are kept under review by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to increase the upper limit for loans that fall within the scope of the Consumer Credit Act to £25,000.

Mr. Leigh: It is intended that the monetary limits in the Consumer Credit Act should be reviewed next year and it would not be appropriate to prejudge the outcome of that review.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to amend the Consumer Credit Act 1974 in order to place a duty on lenders to make a credit reference search for all loans or revolving credit limits of £500 or more.

Mr. Leigh: No. Lenders should be allowed to choose the method or methods of checking the creditworthiness of prospective borrowers.

Competition and Services (Utilities) Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding the Competition and Services (Utilities) Bill.

Mr. Redwood: A number of representations have been received about the Competition and Services (Utilities) Bill, from organisations and individuals, and I am pleased by the interest, generally positive and constructive, which has been shown.

Estate Agents

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all the statutes and regulations which regulate the entitlement to the use of the description estate agent; and when they came into effect.

Mr. Leigh: There is no legislation regulating the use of the description estate agent. However, under the Estate Agents Act 1979 the Director General of Fair Trading can prohibit a person from doing estate agency work if that person appears unfit for such work and has engaged in certain types of misconduct.

Economy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment his Department has made of the decline in the economy of north Staffordshire.

Mr. Leigh: The economy of north Staffordshire will, like other parts of the country, benefit from the Government's success in reducing inflation and the ensuing resumption of economic growth. The latest CBI regional survey shows a sharp resurgence in business confidence in the west midlands region as a whole.

EC Industry Council

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the discussions which took place in the EC Industry Council on 18 November.

Mr. Lilley: The Industry Council meeting on 18 November adopted a resolution concerning electronics, information and communication technologies, and agreed to extend the steel aids code for five years. The Council considered Commission communications on biotechnology, textiles and maritime industries, and the Commission's 20th annual report on competition policy; and it discussed the financial arrangements for the European Coal and Steel Community, the position of the automobile industry, and industrial co-operation with eastern Europe.

Operational Programmes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the European Commission to approve funding for the operational programmes to cover the years 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* A number of United Kingdom operational programmes for "Objective 2" grants from the European Community structural funds in 1992 and 1993 are due for approval by the Commission at the end of this year.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the implementation of article 9 of EC regulation 4253/88 about an additional economic impact within regions of the United Kingdom eligible to receive EC structural fund grants.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* Article 9 of Council Regulation (EEC) 4253/88 requires that

"the increase in the appropriations for the Funds provided for in Article 12(2) of Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88"

should have

"a genuine additional economic impact in the regions concerned"

and result in

"at least an equivalent increase in the total volume of official or similar (Community and national) structural aid in the Member State concerned".

The increase in appropriations referred to relates to the doubling of the funds between 1987 and 1993. However United Kingdom receipts from the funds are not expected to increase in real terms over this period. In these circumstances, article 9 will not have any practical impact in the United Kingdom. The estimates available to me suggest that the United Kingdom is the only member state in this position.

ECGD Insurance Services Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *37*, when he expects the final price for the sale of the Export Credits Guarantee Department Insurance Services Group to NCM will be settled.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 November 1991]:* The detailed terms of the sale are in the final stages of negotiation. As is normal practice, the sale price will be disclosed when the sale has been concluded.

Raleigh Industries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to reply to the letter from H. J. W. Knight, managing director of Raleigh Industries, regarding imports of mainland Chinese bicycles at GSP zero rating; and if he will make a statement on this problem.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* I replied to Mr. Knight's letter on 7 November. The Government's position remains as set out in my letter.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* Accurate information is not currently available on the total number of calls made to directory inquiries by my Department. The Department uses CCTA logging equipment on our central Government telecommunications network but the data provided are not sufficient to give comprehensive information. Charging was introduced by BT for directory inquiries in April 1991 and the Department is currently in the process of advising staff of the most economic way of finding external telephone numbers.

PRIME MINISTER

European Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations in annex 7 of the Presidency report of the current year's European summit.

The Prime Minister: Following the Government's initiative at the Luxembourg European Council in April, the Twelve have tabled a resolution at the UN General Assembly aimed at the early establishment of a register of conventional arms transfers under UN auspices. The resolution was approved by a large majority in the first committee of the General Assembly on 15 November. We expect that the General Assembly as a whole will soon agree the establishment of such a register.

The Twelve continue to discuss the application of the common criteria identified by the European Council as guidelines for their national policies on conventional arms exports. Similar guidelines were agreed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, at a meeting in London on 17-18 October. United Kingdom arms exports are wholly consistent with these guidelines.

Debt Relief

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister how much will be written off the outstanding debts owed by the poorest and most indebted countries under the plan announced by him at the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit.

The Prime Minister: Debt relief of around two thirds will be granted to the poorest and most heavily indebted countries, subject to satisfactory performance under an IMF programme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister what progress he has made in persuading other creditor nations to offer debt relief under the plans announced at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

The Prime Minister: Discussions continue in the Paris Club on the implementation of the Trinidad terms proposals for providing greater debt relief to the poorest and most heavily indebted countries. Our objective remains to secure maximum participation in a multilateral agreement to provide greater debt relief. However, as I made clear at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the United Kingdom, acting in concert with as many creditors as possible, will implement Trinidad terms in the very near future if the Paris Club is unable to reach agreement.

Environmental Assessments

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government first received notification from the EC Environment Commissioner of the dissatisfaction of the European Commission with the implementation by the United Kingdom, following transposition into United Kingdom law, of the 1985 EEC directive on environmental assessment of major projects; what responses have been made to the Commission by Her Majesty's Government to date; and if he will place copies of correspondence on the matter in the Library.

The Prime Minister: The Commission's article 169 letter of 22 March 1990 alleged infraction of directive 85/337/EEC in connection with a proposed waste disposal installation at Outlands Head quarry, Derbyshire. Following the United Kingdom's reply of 21 May 1990, the Commission sent a reasoned opinion about that case on 28 February 1991, to which the United Kingdom replied on 30 April 1991.

The only other formal complaint by the Commission about our application of this directive has been Commissioner Ripa di Meana's well-publicised article 169 letter of 17 October 1991. The Commission has asked for a reply by 17 December.

Correspondence between the Commission and member states about alleged infractions of European law is generally conducted in confidence.

Civil Service

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what are the conventions whereby civil service departments take steps to consult the opposition about their policies towards the end of a Parliament; and when such steps are planned to be taken before the end of the current Parliament.

The Prime Minister: The convention is that, by authority of the Prime Minister, in the last six months of a Parliament of when a general election has been called, Opposition parties may arrange, with the authority of their party leaders and through the head of the civil service, contacts with senior civil servants. These arrangements are designed to allow briefing on factual questions on departmental organisational changes which Opposition parties have in mind or which may result from Opposition party policies. Any exchanges would be confidential. I will be prepared to authorise such arrangements from the end of this year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on the action he intends to take following the ruling of the European Court of Justice in relation to benefit payments to people with disabilities who move to other EC member states.

Mr. Scott: The European Court of Justice has ruled that, for European Community nationals who have been subject to United Kingdom legislation as employed or self-employed persons, mobility allowance is an invalidity benefit and may be exported when a beneficiary moves to another European Community country. The independent adjudicating authorities have interpreted the ruling as applying equally to attendance allowance, and are now giving effect to it.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give for each year since the Social Security Act 1975 came into effect the total number of inquiries held under section 93(3); if he will break down each year's total to give figures for each type of question listed in section 93(1); and if he will give for each year the number of inquiries where the Secretary of State accepted the recommendations in the report and the number where he did not;

(2) what guidelines have been issued to persons appointed to hold inquiries under section 93(3) of the Social Security Act 1975; and if he will place the guidelines in the Library;

(3) if he will list for each year since the Social Security Act 1975 came into effect the names and positions of the persons appointed to hold inquiries under section 93(3).

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 18 November 1991]:* The function of an inquirer appointed under section 93(3) of the Social Security Act 1975 is to hear evidence, elicit the facts, and report to the Secretary of State who then gives his decision on the basis of the facts of the case and the law which applies to those facts.

Inquirers are appointed from a pool of qualified lawyers with relevant experience who receive initial training, which includes attendance at inquiries as an observer.

The appointment to hold an inquiry is limited to a particular case and a list of all those who have undertaken these appointments could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

I am placing in the Library a copy of form CF 100 "Notes regarding Inquiries held under the Social Security Acts" which is sent to all parties appearing at an inquiry.

The total number of inquiries held and the breakdown into the types of question listed in section 93(1) for each year since that Act came into effect are as follows:

Financial year	Total	Categorisation of employment and liability for contributions	Inquiries related to claims for contributory benefit	Unclassified
1975-76	131	104	18	9
1976-77	96	67	14	15
1977-78	58	42	8	8
1978-79	103	89	3	11
1979-80	80	72	3	5
1980-81	64	61	1	2
1981-82	29	27	2	—
1982-83	46	40	5	1
1983-84	52	40	12	—
1984-85	75	64	9	2
1985-86	42	40	2	—
1986-87	41	39	2	—
1987-88	39	36	3	—
1988-89	51	50	1	—
1989-90	37	36	1	—
1990-91	48	45	3	—
Total	992	852	87	53

Note:
Unclassified cases are those where the records now available do not specify the type of question.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether asylum applications from those fleeing persecution because they are lesbian or gay are considered on the same basis as those from asylum seekers who have fled persecution for belonging to other social groups.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All applications for asylum are considered in accordance with the criteria laid down in the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees.

Armed Robbery

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many armed robberies have been committed in each of the Metropolitan police divisions for each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the following information. The number of offences of robbery where a firearm was involved recorded in each of the divisions in 1988, 1989 and 1990 is as follows:

Robbery offences involving a firearm: Metropolitan Police Districts 1988 to 1990

Division	1988 Firearm fired	1988 Firearm not fired	1988 Total	1989 Firearm fired	1989 Firearm not fired	1989 Total	1990 Firearm fired	1990 Firearm not fired	1990 Total
AB Belgravia	0	16	16	0	11	11	0	10	10
BC Chelsea	2	7	9	0	12	12	0	11	11
BD Kensington	0	8	8	0	12	12	1	14	15
BH Notting Hill	0	9	9	1	24	25	0	15	15
CD West End Central	1	22	23	0	15	15	0	20	20
CV Vine Street	2	10	12	1	12	13	1	18	19
CX Charing Cross	0	21	21	0	17	17	0	21	21
DD Paddington Green	0	24	24	1	20	21	1	33	34
DM Marylebone Lane	1	33	34	0	25	25	0	18	18
DR Harrow Road	0	18	18	1	22	23	0	11	11
EH Hampstead	1	28	29	0	33	33	0	41	41
EK Kentish Town	2	30	32	1	33	34	1	44	45
EO Holborn	1	48	49	0	33	33	1	41	42
FD Hammersmith	1	32	33	0	29	29	0	24	24
FF Fulham	1	7	8	0	10	10	0	13	13
GH Hackney	5	50	55	2	44	46	1	57	58
GN Stoke Newington	2	45	47	4	64	68	1	78	79
HB Bethnal Green	2	22	24	2	24	26	0	26	26
HD Leman Street	1	20	21	2	24	26	0	20	20
HH Limehouse	2	30	32	0	25	25	1	28	29
ID Heathrow	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
JB Barkingside	0	24	24	1	21	22	2	29	31
JC Chingford	1	24	25	0	26	26	0	38	38
JI Ilford	1	17	18	0	18	18	0	35	35
JL Leyton	0	36	36	1	52	53	1	52	53
KD Romford	1	18	19	1	45	46	0	29	29
KG Dagenham	0	22	22	1	16	17	0	24	24
KO Plaistow	2	33	35	2	24	26	1	14	15
KW West Ham	2	41	43	3	43	46	0	37	37
LD Brixton	1	37	38	0	33	33	1	40	41

Division	1988 Firearm fired	1988 Firearm not fired	1988 Total	1989 Firearm fired	1989 Firearm not fired	1989 Total	1990 Firearm fired	1990 Firearm not fired	1990 Total
LK Kennington Road	1	18	19	1	20	21	2	25	27
LM Clapham	2	21	23	2	17	19	0	18	18
LS Streatham	0	33	33	0	35	35	0	38	38
MD Southwark	1	47	48	2	43	45	3	34	37
MM Peckham	0	24	24	0	38	38	0	46	46
MS Carter Street	3	28	31	0	34	34	2	30	32
ND Kings Cross Road	0	50	50	1	33	34	1	52	53
NH Holloway	2	36	38	2	47	49	2	52	54
PD Catford	1	41	42	1	41	42	1	44	45
PL Lewisham	3	46	49	5	36	41	1	58	59
PN Orpington	2	17	19	1	11	12	0	21	21
PR Bromley	0	17	17	1	28	29	2	26	28
QA Harrow	4	23	27	3	12	15	3	40	43
QD Wembley	8	42	50	1	45	46	2	47	49
QK Kilburn	6	46	52	1	53	54	3	62	65
RA Woolwich	1	11	12	0	23	23	2	33	35
RG Greenwich	2	30	32	1	39	40	1	41	42
RY Bexleyheath	0	22	22	2	31	33	0	26	26
SA Barnet	1	11	12	0	17	17	0	22	22
SG Golders Green	0	20	20	0	31	31	0	53	53
SV West Hendon	0	12	12	0	20	20	1	20	21
TC Chiswick	0	5	5	0	12	12	0	10	10
TD Hounslow	1	9	10	0	19	19	0	18	18
TG Spelthorne	3	5	8	0	12	12	0	5	5
TW Twickenham	3	14	17	0	8	8	0	26	26
VK Kingston	2	8	10	2	15	17	0	29	29
VW Wimbledon	0	16	16	0	28	28	2	28	30
WA Battersea	0	12	12	1	13	14	0	18	18
WD Tooting	0	11	11	0	29	29	1	25	26
WW Wandsworth	0	7	7	1	10	11	0	14	14
XD Ealing	2	27	29	0	27	27	1	29	30
XS Southhall	1	14	15	3	13	16	0	19	19
XU Uxbridge	0	19	19	1	18	19	1	15	16
XY Hayes	0	8	8	2	8	10	0	8	8
YE Edmonton	0	20	20	0	22	22	2	44	46
YF Enfield	1	25	26	0	23	23	2	32	34
YR Hornsey	1	31	32	1	46	47	2	62	64
YT Tottenham	1	25	26	1	43	44	0	33	33
ZD Croydon	0	14	14	0	25	25	0	35	35
ZN South Norwood	4	34	38	1	24	25	0	31	31
ZP Epsom	0	14	14	2	38	40	2	28	30
Total	88	1,646	1,734	63	1,855	1,918	52	2,139	2,191

Belmarsh Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women prison officers are employed at Belmarsh prison; and what rank they hold.

Mrs. Rumbold: Fifty seven, of whom one is a principal officer and three are senior officers.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present prison officer staffing at Belmarsh prison as of 7 November; how many of these officers are newly recruited to the prison service; and how many have joined Belmarsh by prison transfer from other prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are 464 officers in the ranks from prison officer to principal officer employed at Belmarsh, of whom 133 are newly recruited and 327 have transferred from other prisons.

Begging

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* charged just with begging and *(b)* convicted of just begging under the Operation Burlington and its successor, Operation Taurus.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that under Operations Burlington and Taurus, 718 people were charged only with begging and 534 people were convicted only of begging.

Murder

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the convictions of suspects indicted for murder for each year from 1982 to 1989 for *(a)* men and *(b)* women broken down by category of conviction.

Mr. John Patten: The information in the table relates to homicides recorded in England and Wales from 1982 to 1989 inclusive. The convictions of suspects indicted for murder are given separately for men and women.

Convictions of suspects indicted for murder 1982-1989

Men

England and Wales — *Number of persons*

Conviction	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*198*	*1989*	*Total*
Murder	155	145	163	162	202	210	187	195	1,419
Sec. 2 Manslaughter	86	61	57	60	69	63	59	57	5122
Other Manslaughter	113	111	124	143	141	158	158	116	1,064
Lesser offence	2	19	8	20	30	23	23	28	153
Acquitted/unfit to plead	41	32	56	60	53	51	55	61	409
TOTAL	397	368	408	445	495	505	482	457	3,557
Manslaughter as a percentage of murder plus manslaughter	56	54	53	56	51	51	54	47	53

Women

England and Wales — *Number of persons*

Conviction	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*Total*
Murder	6	8	8	11	6	12	11	9	71
Sec. 2 Manslaughter	16	19	20	14	12	14	12	15	122
Other Manslaughter	12	14	18	15	17	16	32	21	145
Infanticide	2	3	0	2	1	0	1	1	10
Lesser offence	2	1	4	0	5	3	4	5	24
Aquitted/unfit to plead	5	4	6	7	5	8	9	10	54
TOTAL	43	49	65	49	46	53	69	61	426
Manslaughter as a percentage of murder plus manslaughter	82	80	83	72	83	71	80	80	79

Life Sentence

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of *(a)* discretionary life-sentenced prisoners and *(b)* mandatory life-sentenced prisoners, excluding terrorist cases, who have been refused release on licence on the specific instructions of Home Office Ministers for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information in the form requested could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Animals Procedures Committee

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the names of the members of the Animals Procedures Committee with their qualifications for membership.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 19 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 requires that, of the members of the Animal Procedures Committee other than the chairman, at least two thirds shall be persons who hold full registration as medical practitioners, registration as veterinary surgeons or qualifications or experience in a biological subject approved by the Secretary of State as relevant to the work of the committee. The committee is also required to have one member who is a barrister, solicitor or advocate, and in making appointments to the committee my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is required to have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the interests of animal welfare are adequately represented. The Act also requires that at least half the members of the committee are persons who neither hold, nor within the previous six years have held, any licence under the 1986 Act or under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. Current members of the Animal Procedures Committee have been appointed in line with these requirements.

The membership of the Animal Procedures Committee as at 22 November 1991 is as follows:

Lord Nathan, MA Hon LLD (Chairman)
Professor Michael Balls, MA DPhil, University of Nottingham, Chairman of the Trustees of the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME).
Mr. Edward Bernard, FIAT, Chairman, Serotec Ltd.
Professor Margaret Brazier, LLB, Professor of Law, University of Manchester
Professor Barry Bridges, BSc MD, Professor of Histology, Queen's University, Belfast
Dr. Roger Brimblecombe, PhD DSc FRCPath FIBiol, Consultant, Smith Kline and Beecham Laboratories
Professor Fiona Broughton Pipkin, MA DPhil, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham
Dr. Henry Carter, CBE MRCVS, Senior Vice President, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Professor Anthony Dayan, MD FRCP FRCPath FIBiol, Professor of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital
Mr. Roger Ewbank, OBE MVSc FIBiol MRCVS, Director of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)
Mr. Clive Hollands, Secretary to the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation (CRAE)
Sir Andrew Huxley, OM FRS, Past President, Royal Society
Dr. Susan Iversen, MA PhD, Director of Behavioural Pharmacology, Merck, Sharp & Dohme Research Laboratories
Professor John Ledingham, DM FRCP, Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford
Dr. Brian Newbould, BPharm FPS PhD MCPP, Director International Research Affairs, ICI Corporate R & T
Professor Onora O'Neill, MA PhD, Professor of Philosophy, University of Essex
Professor Thomas Pilkington, MD FRCP, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, St. George's Hospital Medical School
Professor Lord Soulsby, MA PhD DVSM AM DSc MRCVS, Professor of Animal Pathology, University of Cambridge

Professor Michael Spyer, BSc PhD DSc, Professor of Physiology, Royal Free Hospital Medical School
Professor Peter Venables, BA PhD Hon DSc FBPsS, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University of York

Animal Experiments

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the figure for the number of experiments on live animals conducted in the last year for which these are available; what was the figure for 10 years ago; and what was the percentage change.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures for experiments on living animals in 1980 and scientific procedures on living animals in 1990 are given in table 18 of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 1990" (Cm 1574), a copy of which is in the Library.

The 1990 figure is 30 per cent. lower than that recorded for 1980, but the underlying fall is greater than this. During this period the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 was introduced which extended the controls on the use of living animals in research to some research work not previously controlled. As a result the 1990 figure includes procedures which would not have been counted as experiments in 1980.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the possible closure of magistrates courts as a consequence of the new funding system: and if he will make it his policy to announce his support for the present structure and network of local courts.

Mr. John Patten: We have received a number of representations expressing concern about possible closure of magistrates' courthouses. We are committed to the principle of local summary justice and hence to the maintenance of a network of local courthouses. At the same time it is necessary for magistrates' courts committees, in consultation with their paying authorities, to keep under review the number and location of courthouses in the light of all relevant circumstances, including for example the volume of proceedings heard there; the resources available to support and run them; the physical condition of the accommodation and the work required to achieve good standards of safety, security and facilities for court users; and the effect of closure in terms of cost and convenience for the community concerned and other criminal justice services. The balance between operational efficiency and other considerations has to be judged case by case by courts committees and, in the event of an appeal under section 56 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979, by the Home Secretary.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Qualifications

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the best available estimate of the cost to public funds of a teacher obtaining a teacher qualification through *(a)* the BEd-BA—qualified teacher status—*(b)* the post-graduate Certificate of Education—ordinary—and *(c)* the articled teachers scheme—PGCE—respectively.

Mr. Fallon: The estimated average cost at 1991-92 prices of training a teacher in a higher education institution outside London through a four-year undergraduate course is about £25,000; through a one-year PGCE about £6,000; and through the two-year articled teacher scheme about £19,500. Costs for training teachers in London institutions are higher, as are costs of training teachers in shortage secondary subjects, due to the special bursaries they receive.

Modern Languages

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which institutions in the PCFC sector have received from Her Majesty's inspectorate the highest rating for the quality of teaching and learning in modern languages.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council award quality ratings, based on advice from Her Majesty's Inspectorate and others, to institutions in nine programme areas. Courses where modern foreign languages form the major element are in programme area 7. The following institutions have been judged as having outstanding quality in 50 per cent. or more of provision—full and part-time—in programme area 7.

Bristol Polytechnic
City of London Polytechnic
Kingston Polytechnic
Newcastle Polytechnic
Nottingham Polytechnic
Polytechnic South West
King Alfred's College, Winchester

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the European Community ministerial council meetings at which his Department has, or will be, represented during November and December.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend attended the meeting of the Council and the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council on Monday 25 November.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Officials from this Department have made in total 14 visits to EC member states, of which 10 were visits to Brussels, and spent 23 nights away from the United Kingdom during the period from 1 November 1991 to the present time.

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for himself, and for each of the ministers at his Department, details of *(a)* the

number of visits made in the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, *(b)* the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and *(c)* the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made one visit to Brussels in the past month, on official business related to the European Community. He spent one night away from the United Kingdom on this occasion. None of his ministerial colleagues have made any visits relating to European Community business in the past month.

Further and Higher Education Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the Further and Higher Education Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Eggar: Representations have been received from a small number of organisations on various aspects of the further education clauses and from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and other interested organisations on various aspects of the higher education clauses.

Education (Schools) Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the Education (Schools) Bill.

Mr. Eggar: The Education (Schools) Bill gives effect to proposals outlined in the parents charter. Taking both documents together, we have to date received 806 items of correspondence concerning them: 105 through Members of Parliament, 128 from educational bodies and associations, and 573 from individuals. We have also held three meetings with interested bodies, at which these proposals were discussed.

Children's Assessment

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research his department has funded by *(a)* Her Majesty's inspectorate, *(b)* the National Fund for Educational Research and *(c)* other bodies, into the validity of assessing children's IQ or other measurements of potential ability.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has not funded research into this question in recent years.

HEALTH

Dental Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish for each family health service authority area in England *(a)* its population, *(b)* the number of people registered with a general dental practitioner, *(c)* the ratio of general dental practitioners to the number of people registered, *(d)* *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)* and *(e)* the percentage of children under the age of 18 years registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table. The new dental contract introduced in October last year provides for the first time, all-round continuing care. More than 21 million people in England have registered with a dentist under the new contract, a faster take-up than we or the dental profession expected.

FHSA	*Population 30 June 1989 All adults and children* *(a)*	*Continuing care and Capitation Registrations 30 September 1991* *(b)*	*Total Registrations per GDP* *(c)*	*Registrations as a percentage of population* *(d)*	*Child Registrations as a percentage of child population* *(e)*
Northern					
Cleveland	552,836	269,396	1,613	49	59
Cumbria	491,627	235,067	1,588	48	58
Durham	596,928	260,364	1,783	44	50
Northumberland	303,614	126,858	1,425	42	54
Gateshead	205,790	84,457	1,341	41	50
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	277,620	115,451	1,190	42	47
North Tyneside	192,715	89,982	1,551	47	56
South Tyneside	155,789	64,071	1,456	41	48
Sunderland	296,193	111,608	1,618	38	42
Yorkshire					
Humberside	856,250	390,534	1,972	46	54
North Yorkshire	722,305	371,969	1,531	51	60
Bradford	467,704	218,337	1,495	47	46
Calderdale	197,405	97,669	1,684	49	56
Kirklees	375,559	179,113	1,614	48	52
Leeds	711,739	366,523	1,398	50	57
Wakefield	314,202	136,663	1,687	43	52
Trent					
Derbyshire	929,401	406,190	1,625	44	53
Leicestershire	891,926	421,574	1,809	47	55
Lincolnshire	586,855	278,690	2,248	47	56
Nottinghamshire	1,014,822	484,087	1,813	48	57
Barnsley	221,739	83,817	1,552	38	49
Doncaster	293,262	133,893	1,522	46	60

FHSA	Population 30 June 1989 All adults and children (a)	Continuing care and Capitation Registrations 30 September 1991 (b)	Total Registrations per GDP (c)	Registrations as a percentage of population (d)	Child Registrations as a percentage of child population (e)
Rotherham	253,632	100,959	1,530	40	52
Sheffield	526,558	246,476	1,408	47	57
East Anglia					
Cambridgeshire	655,047	311,521	1,702	48	55
Norfolk	748,501	387,803	1,731	52	71
Suffolk	641,029	342,062	1,736	53	58
North West Thames					
Bedfordshire	531,168	181,933	1,300	34	36
Hertfordshire	987,390	475,563	1,189	48	64
Barnet	310,411	93,867	647	30	45
Brent and Harrow	448,535	174,630	934	39	44
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	638,112	217,524	877	34	36
Hillingdon	235,270	100,062	1,300	43	43
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	303,996	92,198	386	30	27
North East Thames					
Essex	1,532,067	635,028	1,440	41	53
Barking and Havering	380,020	135,611	1,267	36	44
Camden and Islington	353,141	128,359	729	36	31
City and East London	566,946	168,781	976	30	28
Enfield and Haringey	452,039	162,480	903	36	46
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	443,908	171,822	1,185	39	50
South East Thames					
East Sussex	711,830	354,838	1,286	50	59
Kent	1,523,673	642,795	1,260	42	52
Greenwich and Bexley	433,458	167,066	1,137	39	48
Bromley	299,398	92,018	719	31	53
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	684,768	271,662	995	40	36
South West Thames					
Surrey	999,978	460,362	1,016	46	59
West Sussex	704,860	361,120	1,267	51	68
Croydon	317,362	132,502	1,086	42	48
Kingston and Richmond	299,856	95,921	685	32	56
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	589,180	212,582	878	36	42
Wessex					
Dorset	656,827	358,565	1,580	55	66
Hampshire	1,545,962	776,403	1,525	50	56
Wiltshire	558,395	254,704	1,612	46	54
Isle of Wight	130,450	61,979	1,377	48	58
Oxford					
Berkshire	749,452	309,343	1,208	41	52
Buckinghamshire	534,349	284,277	1,241	45	58
Northamptonshire	576,059	248,627	1,727	43	52
Oxfordshire	577,600	245,632	1,234	43	54
South Western					
Avon	952,850	490,081	1,365	51	61
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	464,084	233,655	1,657	50	61
Devon	1,029,886	549,722	1,482	53	63
Gloucestershire	529,494	282,119	1,454	53	61
Somerset	460,890	248,092	1,632	54	64
West Midlands					
Hereford and Worcester	675,236	323,924	1,604	48	58
Salop	403,265	211,710	1,654	52	60
Staffordshire	1,038,990	440,568	1,791	42	55
Warwickshire	483,060	222,861	1,701	46	56
Birmingham	992,477	426,503	1,461	43	45
Coventry	304,129	136,981	1,851	45	43
Dudley	305,383	127,942	1,706	42	49
Sandwell	295,544	114,455	1,659	39	38
Solihull	204,392	79,544	1,348	39	48
Walsall	263,557	92,252	1,591	35	44
Wolverhampton	249,927,	98,067	1,582	39	35
Mersey					
Cheshire	958,562	468,405	1,455	49	57

FHSA	Population 30 June 1989 All adults and children (a)	Continuing care and Capitation Registrations 30 September 1991 (b)	Total Registrations per GDP (c)	Registrations as a percentage of population (d)	Child Registrations as a percentage of child population (e)
Liverpool	465,910	196,477	1,346	42	48
St. Helens and Knowsley	346,282	140,613	1,580	41	48
Sefton	299,623	138,172	1,535	46	59
Wirral	336,168	153,849	1,304	46	52
North Western					
Lancashire	1,390,794	624,716	1,509	45	55
Bolton	265,007	116,997	1,648	44	53
Bury	176,399	80,324	1,361	46	56
Manchester	443,626	201,032	1,129	45	51
Oldham	220,715	93,587	1,376	42	56
Rochdale	207,617	90,356	1,738	44	50
Salford	234,594	109, 848	1,772	47	71
Stockport	291,270	161,577	1,524	55	66
Tameside	218,242	92,859	1,688	43	57
Trafford	215,291	122,297	1,491	57	70
Wigan	309,623	138,715	1,524	45	58

Note: Population estimates for 1991 are not yet available. Population estimates as at June 1989 have been used to be consistent with the patient registration data published by the Dental Practice Board.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish for each family health service authority area in England, and for each year since 1970, the percentage of children over the age of five years in maintained schools inspected by the community dental service.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not held in the form requested.

Nurses, Medway

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of nursing staff currently employed by the Medway district health authority, relative to 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is given in the table.

NHS nursing and midwifery staff (including agency) at 30 September each year
Medway district health authority

Years	[1] Whole-time equivalents
1979	[2]1,310
1990	1,710

[1] All figures independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[2] Not adjusted for the reduction of nurses working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).
Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

NHS Staff Statistics

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of general practitioners, nurses and midwives currently employed in the national health service relative to 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

NHS nursing and midwifery staff (including agency) and general practitioners
England

Year	[1] Nursing and midwifery Whole-time equivalents	[1] [2] General Practitioners Numbers (head count)
1979	[3]358,400	36,000
1990	402,100	43,800

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100).
[2] Includes medical, dental and ophthalmic practitioners.
[3] Not adjusted for reduction in nurses working hours during 1980/81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).
Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower; General Medical Services basic statistics; Dental Practice Board; and Family Health Services Authorities.

Perinatal Mortality

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will have regard to the perinatal mortality figures for Staffordshire when determining his Department's priorities.

Mr. Dorrell: Executive letter, EL(91)103, "Priorities and planning guidance for the NHS for 1992/93" issued by the NHS management executive in July 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library, included guidance on NHS priorities. This specified that stillbirths and infant deaths are to be tackled as a priority by the NHS in 1992-93. This applies to Staffordshire as to all other health authorities.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department is contributing, and over what period, to the research project on anabolic steroids misuse being carried out by the centre for research on drugs and health behaviour.

Mr. Dorrell: This is a one-year research project with a total estimated cost of £70,000. The Department plans to contribute 90 per cent.—£63,000—of the total cost over

that period. The remaining 10 per cent.—£7,000—will be met by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. Work on the project is expected to start in January 1992.

Contraception

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines have been issued to general practitioners by his Department concerning leaflets for patients relating to the contraceptive services and abortion counselling provided by GP practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: GPs are required by their terms of service to compile a practice leaflet which should be made available to patients on their lists. The leaflet must indicate whether the doctor provides contraceptive services. It is left to the discretion of individual doctors as to whether information is included about abortion counselling.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many centres in England and Wales offer professional training in contraception; how many general practitioners in England and Wales hold the certificate of the joint committee on contraception; and what percentage of the total number of general practitioners this represents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest United Kingdom figures from the joint committee on contraception—JCC—for the number of premises approved for the training of doctors in the two JCC certificates are:

	Number
Community and hospital clinics	1,216
GP premises	89

These are in addition to such training on contraception as takes place during vocational training for general practice.

At 22 November 1991, some 30,636 JCC certificates had been issued to doctors. The percentage of practising GPs holding these certificates is not known.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the components of the course leading to the joint committee on contraception certificate; and how long the course lasts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The course for the joint committee on contraception—JCC—general certificate in family planning involves acquisition of acceptable gynaecological experience, and attendance for theoretical training at least at four half-day sessions. This is followed by at least eight sessions involving practical training in barrier methods. Extended training for the JCC's advanced certificate includes IUD insertions. Further details can be obtained direct from the JCC, 27 Sussex place, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RG.

Insulin Injector Pens

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how long he has been considering making needles for insulin injector pens available upon prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Negotiations with manufacturers of insulin injection pen systems, which include needles, are continuing. In the light of these discussions we aim to make these systems available on prescription as soon as resources will allow.

Patient Statistics

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish figures setting out the number of patients who failed to attend national health service hospitals after being granted firm appointments, as a percentage of all appointments made, for each region for the year to March 1991;

(2) if he will publish figures setting out the number of patients who failed to attend national health service hospitals after being granted firm in-patient appointments for the year to March 1991, expressed as numerical totals and as percentages of all such appointments made for each region.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on numbers of people failing to attend for in-patient admissions is not collected centrally. The available information for out-patient departments is given in the table.

Consultant out-patient and GP maternity clinics in 1990-91 (provisional)
NHS hospitals, England

Regional Health Authority	*Referral attendances*				*Consultant initiated attendances*				*All attendances*			
	Seen	*Did not attend (DNA)*	*Total*	*DNA per cent. of total*	*Seen*	*Did not attend (DNA)*	*Total*	*DNA per cent. of total*	*Seen*	*Did not attend (DNA)*	*Total*	*DNA per cent. of total*
Northern	601,556	65,910	667,466	10	1,925,757	286,097	2,211,854	13	2,527,313	352,007	2,879,320	12
Yorkshire	622,341	75,375	697,716	11	2,143,758	317,241	2,460,999	13	2,766,099	392,616	3,158,715	12
Trent	792,611	89,454	882,065	10	2,614,660	372,723	2,987,383	12	3,407,271	462,177	3,869,448	12
East Anglian	346,553	28,180	374,733	8	1,088,532	103,063	1,191,595	9	1,435,085	131,243	1,566,328	8
North West Thames	612,944	96,052	708,996	14	1,855,466	317,434	2,172,900	15	2,468,410	413,486	2,881,896	14
North East Thames	771,875	129,985	901,860	14	2,514,048	434,484	2,948,532	15	3,285,923	564,469	3,850,392	15
South East Thames	722,382	106,784	829,166	13	2,235,816	337,209	2,573,025	13	2,958,198	443,993	3,402,191	13
South West Thames	501,402	52,202	553,604	9	1,487,099	178,227	1,665,326	11	1,988,501	230,429	2,218,930	10
Wessex	464,852	45,156	510,008	9	1,411,722	158,850	1,570,572	10	1,876,574	204,006	2,080,580	10
Oxford	385,120	40,024	425,144	9	1,139,783	144,700	1,284,483	11	1,524,903	184,724	1,709,627	11
South Western	516,618	47,067	563,685	8	1,443,765	164,700	1,608,465	10	1,960,383	211,767	2,172,150	10
West Midlands	835,586	109,552	945,138	12	2,931,012	449,860	3,380,872	13	3,766,598	559,412	4,326,010	13
Mersey	444,906	69,520	514,426	14	1,519,594	261,015	1,780,609	15	1,964,500	330,535	2,295,035	14
North Western	779,754	120,796	900,550	13	2,702,481	452,390	3,154,871	14	3,482,235	573,186	4,055,421	14
Special Health Authorities	115,601	18,854	134,455	14	602,905	94,184	697,089	14	718,506	113,038	831,544	14
England	8,514,101	1,094,911	9,609,012	11	27,616,398	4,072,177	31,688,575	13	36,130,499	5,167,088	41,297,587	13

Family Planning

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he received a copy of the South East Thames regional health authority review of family planning and abortion services, August 1991; what action the regional health authority is taking to meet its recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A copy of the region's report was received on 12 August. I understand the regional health authority considered the report at its meeting in July and agreed that it should be issued and commended to authorities in the region. The region will ensure that purchasing authorities and family health services authorities take the recommendations forward in their purchasing plans. The region is also planning to discuss some aspects of the report with its local education authorities.

WALES

Hypothermia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing how many people categorised by age died of hypothermia, or illnesses associated with hypothermia, in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The following table gives numbers of deaths, and rates per million population, for which hypothermia was stated as the underlying cause of death in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1990.

Recognising the risk of hypothermia for vulnerable people, especially, but not only, the elderly, the Welsh Office is distributing the "Keep Warm Keep Well" brochure in Welsh and English to all authorities and agencies with the request that they ensure that those who need to see it get a copy. This distribution will be complemented by Welsh Office financial support for advice lines run by voluntary organisations.

Number of deaths, and rates per million population, for which hypothermia[1] was stated as the underlying cause of death in Wales 1979-1984

Age at death	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
All ages[2]	31	11·0	16	5·7	26	9·2	25	8·9	12	4·3	17	6·1
Under 1[2]	—	—	1	27·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1–4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5–9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10–14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15–19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20–24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
25–29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
30–34	1	5·0	—	—	—	—	1	5·2	1	5·4	—	—
35–39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40–44	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6·3	1	6·2	—	—
45–49	1	6·4	—	—	—	—	3	19·7	—	—	—	—
50–54	2	12·0	—	—	1	6·3	—	—	—	—	1	6·5
55–59	1	5·4	1	5·6	—	—	1	6·0	—	—	—	—
60–64	1	6·9	—	—	3	19·0	3	18·5	—	—	1	5·8
65–69	1	6·7	1	6·7	1	6·8	1	7·0	3	21·8	2	15·0
70–74	7	56·7	4	32·1	2	16·0	2	16·0	2	16·0	—	—
75–79	4	46·9	4	45·8	5	56·1	3	33·2	1	10·9	1	10·7
80–84	6	133·3	3	63·6	5	100·2	2	38·9	2	37·5	6	108·7
85 and over	7	244·8	2	67·8	9	307·2	8	261·4	2	63·3	6	182·9

1985-1990

Age at death	1985		1986		1987		1988		1989		1990	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
All ages[2]	33	11·7	24	8·5	19	6·7	12	4·2	10	3·5	8	2·8
Under 1[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1–4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5–9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10–14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15–19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20–24	—	—	—	—	1	4·3	—	—	—	—	—	—
25–29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
30–34	—	—	1	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35–39	—	—	1	5·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40–44	—	—	1	5·7	—	—	1	5·1	—	—	—	—
45–49	—	—	—	—	1	6·4	1	6·2	—	—	—	—
50–54	—	—	2	13·3	—	—	1	6·5	—	—	—	—
55–59	—	—	2	12·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
60–64	1	6·0	2	12·2	2	12·5	—	—	1	6·4	—	—
65–69	2	14·5	1	7·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	12·9
70–74	7	55·9	—	—	1	8·3	2	17·1	2	17·6	—	—
75–79	5	52·9	5	52·7	4	41·7	1	10·4	1	10·3	2	20·5
80–84	8	139·4	3	51·3	6	99·7	3	48·7	2	31·5	—	—
85 and over	10	295·0	6	168·0	4	103·4	3	73·8	4	94·1	4	89·9

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 778.3 and 991.6.
[2] Excluding deaths at ages under 28 days for the years 1986-1990.

Age Statistics

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the numbers of persons in Wales aged over *(a)* 60, *(b)* 75 and *(c)* 100 years at the latest available date and in 1979, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The numbers of people in Wales aged over 60 and over 75 in 1979 and 1990, as estimated by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, are shown in the following table. These mid-year estimates are not available for centenarians. However, data from a 10 per cent. sample of the Department of Social Security records indicate that there were some 100 centenarians in Wales in November 1979 and 210 in September 1990.

Residents in Wales aged:	Mid year 1979	Mid year 1990
Over 60	548,500	603,100
Over 75	138,700	184,000

The figures are a tribute to the continuing improvements in health and general care and support since 1979.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost in the last full year for which figures are available of payments made, under environmentally sensitive area agreements, to farmers in each of the Welsh environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. David Hunt: The information for 1990-91 is as follows:

	£
Cambrian Mountains ESA (Original Area)	476,882
Cambrian Mountains ESA (Extension)	120,723
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	284,102
Total	881,707

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of farms eligible for entry into each of the Welsh environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	number
Cambrian Mountains ESA (Original Area)	300
Cambrian Mountains ESA (Extension)	295
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	960
Total	1,555

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estitmate of the savings to the common agriculture policy resulting from reduced output in the designated Welsh environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. David Hunt: The net budgetary effects of the designated Welsh environmentally sensitive areas form part of the wider socio-economic monitoring studies my Department has commissioned from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. The university's interim report "Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Wales—Socio Economic Aspects of Designation—Interim Report—March 1991" was issued in June 1991 and a copy is available in the Library of the House. The final report is due to be submitted to my Department by the end of June A1992.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of farms below 50 hectares, between 50 and 100 hectares and above 100 hectares which are covered by environmentally sensitive area agreements in each of the Welsh environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of farms in each size grouping is shown in the table:

	Below 50 hectares	50-100 hectares	Above 100 hectares	Total
Cambrian Mountains ESA (Original and Extended Areas)	57	61	214	332
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	205	91	70	366
Total	262	152	284	698

Some farms in the Cambrian Mountains ESA have more than one agreement, covering separate features.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers and percentages of treatments and procedures in Welsh hospitals for patients aged over *(a)* 60, *(b)* 75 and *(c)* 100 years at the latest available date and in 1979, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information given in the table relates to the number of deaths and discharges from all Welsh NHS hospitals, including mental handicap and mental illness hospitals.

	Age of patient: 60 and over	75 and over	100 and over
1979			
Deaths and discharges	105,787	41,174	15
Percentage[1]	30·1	11·7	0·0
1989			
Deaths and discharges	194,223	89,983	41
Percentage[1]	36·9	17·1	0·0

[1] As percentage of total deaths and discharges.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of hospitals and hospital beds in Wales in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the table:

	[1]1974	[1]1979	[2]Latest
Number of Hospitals:			
NHS	189	173	152
Private	n/a	n/a	6
Beds			
NHS—staffed beds allocated	24,972	23,512	19,534
Private	n/a	n/a	268

[1] As at 31 December.
[2] As at 31 March 1990 for private hospitals and 31 March 1991 for NHS hospitals.

As my hon. Friend can see, the number of hospitals and beds has reduced over the lifetime of both Conservative and Labour Governments as new hospitals have replaced outdated health buildings and as new medical techniques and treatments including day cases have reduced the

demand for beds. While the number of out-patients in the NHS fell by 3 per cent. in the period 1974-79 it has since risen by 29 per cent. under this Government. Similarly the number of in-patients treated rose by 6 per cent. in 1974-79 and 38 per cent. between 1979 and 1990-91. Day cases are up by a record 233 per cent. since 1979.

A483 Accidents

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fatal accidents have occurred on the stretch of the A483 between Rhostyllen and Johnstown; and what is the national average for comparable stretches of road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The last fatal road accident reported to the Welsh Office by the North Wales police authority on the stretch of the A483 between Rhostyllen and Johnstown was in June 1986. In August 1987 a new stretch of A483, south of Rhostyllen, was opened and since then there have been no fatal road accidents recorded on this road, between Rhostyllen and the junction with the B5426, near Johnstown.

There have been two fatal road accidents on the old stretch of road between Rhostyllen and Johnstown, now the B5605, since August 1987: in June 1988 and November 1991.

Between 1987 and 1989, the average fatal accident rate, per 100 million vehicle kilometres on Welsh trunk roads was 1·0 for built-up roads and 1·2 for non built-up roads.

Fraud

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of fraud have been brought to the attention of the police by the Welsh Office in respect of misuse of the business improvement service scheme by region in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: Nine firms of consultants have been, or are being, investigated in connection with suspected fraud under the now closed business improvement services scheme which operated in steel closure areas. It would not be appropriate to disclose further details pending the outcome of these investigations and any subsequent legal proceedings.

Hearing Impaired Children

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what review has he made of the needs of deaf and hearing impaired children as they pursue the examinations and coursework of the GCSE; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for administering the examination process rests with individual examining boards. The Joint Council for the GCSE has issued guidance common to all examining groups to deal with pupils with disabilities such as deafness or a hearing impairment.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent by each local education authority on providing speech therapy during each of the last five years for *(a)* primary school pupils and *(b)* secondary school pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally.

Heart Specialists

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the number of heart specialists working in national health service hospitals in Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Bids for consultants to service new developments or to expand existing health services are made by health authorities to the Welsh medical and dental manpower committee for manpower approval. Currently there are no bids outstanding for heart specialists to work in Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire.

Cardigan Bay

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet representatives of the Welsh fishing industry to discuss the conservation of fishing stocks in Cardigan bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: On 2 December Fisheries Departments will be holding the annual meeting with industry representatives to discuss the latest data on stock levels for fisheries around the United Kingdom coast including the Irish sea, which covers Cardigan bay. The next step will be a meeting of the EC Fisheries Council to determine 1992 fishing quotas.

Defence-related Employment

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of defence-related employment in west Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Comprehensive information on the level of defence-related employment in west Wales is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria determine whether money is allocated to United Kingdom companies under the aid and trade provision.

Mrs. Chalker: The criteria for decisions on aid and trade provision cases are set out in the ATP "Guidelines for Applicants" booklet. I have placed copies of the latest edition of the booklet in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if aid and trade provision projects are appraised for their effects on low income groups.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid and trade provision projects are not selected according to their benefits to low income groups, but their appraisal may, if appropriate, cover their impact on particular social groups.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future size of the aid and trade programmes.

Mrs. Chalker: The size of the aid and trade provision is under consideration in the light of the resources made available for the aid programme announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Indonesia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), *Official Report*, 20 November, column *267*, if he will undertake to review bilateral aid to Indonesia.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government, in welcoming the Commission of Inquiry established by the President of Indonesia, have indicated that they wish to see the investigation carried out promptly, fully and fairly. We have urged that those members of the armed forces responsible for the shootings in East Timor earlier this month should be brought on trial. Together with our Community partners, we will consider the position, including that on aid, in the light of the written report of the commission of inquiry.

Trinidad Terms

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which would benefit from the implementation of the Trinidad terms; and for how much debt relief each of these countries would be eligible.

Mrs. Chalker: The poorest, most heavily indebted countries which are following IMF-sponsored programmes of economic reform and which have chronic balance of payment difficulties insoluble through normal rescheduling arrangements will benefit from Trinidad terms. Eligibility will be decided on a case-by-case basis, and exact criteria are still being refined.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much debt relief the poorest and most indebted countries would receive if all the Paris Club creditors fully implemented the Trinidad terms.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting at Harare in October, the full value of the Trinidad terms which is potentially available if all Paris Club creditors agree to implement them is approximately $17 billion.

Aid

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the compound rate of growth of United Kingdom net aid to developing countries which would *(a)* halve the gap by which the United Kingdom falls below the United Nations target in five years and *(b)* meet the United Nations target in 10 years.

Mrs. Chalker: No. This would involve economic forecasting which is not a matter for me.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the criteria for the grant of overseas aid having regard to democracy and the human rights record of the recipient country.

Mrs. Chalker: In allocating aid to individual countries we take into account a number of factors. These include the needs of the country concerned, and the effectiveness with which our aid can be used. We consider whether the country has adopted policies which will help combat poverty and promote economic growth and social progress. The quality of government in the country concerned is an integral part of our assessment. Good government includes sound economic policy, effective and accountable public institutions and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the new Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development proposals on tied aid; and if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department on further untying aid.

Mrs. Chalker: A package of reforms covering both export credits and tied aid credits has been accepted ad referendum by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development consensus participants. Her Majesty's Government support the package as a useful step forward in our continuing efforts to introduce greater transparency and discipline into these fields and to reduce trade distortions. We very much hope that the package will be ratified by mid-December. On untying of aid, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 November.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the total amount of aid offered to the developing world by his Department in each year since 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: Gross aid expenditure[1] by calendar year was as follows:

	£ million
1986	1,217
1987	1,189
1988	1,536
1989	1,635
1990	1,578

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what level of priority is afforded to the African continent in determining the Government's policy on aid to the developing worlds.

Mrs. Chalker: African countries have a high priority in the overseas aid programme. In 1990, African countries received 46 per cent.—£389 million—of the United Kingdom's gross bilateral aid which is geographically allocable. For United Kingdom aid channelled through multilateral organisations—£683 million in 1990—we estimate about half went to African countries. We intend to maintain a substantial programme of assistance to those African countries where aid can be used effectively.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take the necessary steps to raise the proportion of gross national product applied to aid for the developing world to the level recommended by the United Nations.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government accept in principle the target set by the United Nations for overseas aid as a proportion of gross national product. However, we are not

in a position to set down a timetable for reaching the target. Future levels of aid will depend on our economic circumstances, and on other claims on public expenditure. Our aid programme is planned to grow in real terms, is of high quality and carefully targeted.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recommended targets for the proportion of gross national product to be applied for the developing world have been agreed within the United Nations.

Mrs. Chalker: There are three United Nations targets for resources transfers to the developing countries. These are:

(i) combined private and official flows equal to 1 per cent. of GNP;
(ii) net official development assistance (oda) to all developing countries equal to 0·7 per cent. of GNP; and
(iii) net official development assistance to the least developed countries equal to 0·15 per cent. of GNP, or 0·20 per cent. of GNP for those countries who have already achieved 0·15 per cent.

United Nations Contributions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial pledge was made by the United Kingdom in support of the United Nations development programme during the UNDP pledging conference for 1992 held in New York on 5 and 6 November; what was the total pledged to the UNDP; and if he will make a statement on the future of the United Nations development programme in the light of its funding base.

Mrs. Chalker: In common with many other major donors we have not yet announced our pledge for UNDP's 1992 programme. I expect to do so early next year. Over recent years UNDP has maintained its position at the centre of the UN development system and the current pattern seems likely to continue. But for the reasons given above the total amounts available in 1992 are not yet known.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial pledge was made by the United Kingdom in support of the United Nations fund for population activities at the New York pledging conference on 5 and 6 November; what proportion of the total funds available to UNFPA for 1992 will be provided by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the future of the United Nations fund for population activities in the light of its funding base.

Mrs. Chalker: We have not yet announced our pledge for the United Nations population fund's 1992 programme. I expect to do so early next year. Our 1991 contribution to UNFPA of £7·5 million represented a 25 per cent. increase on the previous year.

Climate Change

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been sent by the Minister for Overseas Development to the letter dated 15 August sent by the co-ordinator of the Save the Forest-Save the Planet campaign regarding the Government's position on climate change; and if he will publish the correspondence.

Mrs. Chalker: I set out my views on this campaign to the co-ordinator in a letter to him on 25 June, which my private secretary confirmed in reply to the letter of 15 August. I am sending the hon. Member copies of both letters.

EMPLOYMENT

Sealink Stena

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out in detail the proposals he made to Sealink Stena covering redundancy arrangements following the announcement of impending redundancies.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made no proposals to Sealink Stena regarding redundancy arrangements. As Member of Parliament for Folkestone and Hythe, my right hon. and learned Friend, in consultation with others in the area, has established the Sealink Stena action group. The group is co-ordinating and providing practical assistance and guidance for employees whose jobs are being lost, with the aim of getting those affected back to work at the earliest possible opportunity. Other participants in the group include the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), Kent training and enterprise council, the Employment Service, the Sealink Stena company, other local businesses, local enterprise agencies, and the county and district councils.

Assistance being channelled through the group includes on-site job shops displaying vacancies in the local and surrounding areas; jobsearch workshops providing advice and guidance on such matters as job applications and interviews; advice on training and self-employment; and offers of office and workshop accommodation.

The Employment Service and training and enterprise councils in other areas affected by these redundancies are all taking action within their normal range of responsibilities to alleviate the effect of these job losses.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of (i) the number of visits made in the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Forth: In the four weeks to 21 November, my right hon. and learned Friend made one visit to Germany, and I made one visit to Brussels to attend a Social Affairs Council. Neither of these visits involved an overnight stay.

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European

Community and the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Forth: Central records are not kept. The following information has been obtained by a telephone survey of the Employment Department group. In the four weeks to 21 November in connection with official EC business:
37 officials visited destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the rest of the European Community;
54 officials visited Brussels;
officials spent 122 nights away from the United Kingdom.

Self-catering Accommodation

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives of the self-catering accommodation sector to discuss issues currently affecting the sector.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Viscount Ullswater, who is Minister responsible for tourism, frequently meet representatives of all sectors in the tourism industry on engagements around the country.

Radiological Emergencies

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will bring forward legislation to meet the requirements of European Community directive 89/618/Euratom on informing the general public about health protection measures to be applied and steps to be taken in the event of a radiological emergency.

Mr. Forth: Proposals for regulations to implement European Council directive 89/618/Euratom are contained in a Health and Safety Commission consultative document due to be published on 28 November 1991. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library. The document will form the basis of a three-month period of public consultation. The commission is required to consider whether changes to the proposals are needed in the light of comments received, during the consultation period. Thereafter, under the terms of article 33 of the Euratom treaty, the European Commission must be given a three-month period within which to comment on the final proposals before legislation is brought forward.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Access)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any proposals to improve public access to the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. MacGregor: The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee keep under regular review arrangements for access, including improvements for speeding up entry for line of route visitors, access for the disabled and for providing them with protection from the weather. Any proposals for further improvements would have to be considered by the new Administration Committee when it is established.

0898 Telephone Calls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress has been made in introducing a permanent bar on 0898 calls from parliamentary buildings.

Mr. MacGregor: An interim decision to bar such calls was taken by the Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee in July 1991 pending the formation of the new Administration Committee; it will now be for this Committee to consider this matter at an early meeting.

Agencies (Replies to Members)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Lord President of the Council how the Government propose to improve access to the replies given by agency chief executives in response to parliamentary questions.

Mr. MacGregor: In its recent White Paper—Cm 1761—published in response to the seventh report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, "The Next Steps Initiative", the Government stated that they were considering how access to the replies given by agency chief executives to parliamentary questions could be improved.

The arrangement whereby chief executives reply direct by letter to written questions on operational matters is intended to recognise their direct responsibility for matters which have been delegated to them by Ministers and to ensure that replies about the carrying out of Government business are full, prompt and as helpful as possible. The arrangement has worked well in those respects. However, it has become apparent that there have been some practical difficulties with the procedure—which my predecessor announced on 31 October 1990—of making the letters public by placing them in the House of Commons Library and its Public Information Office.

The Government have therefore decided to propose to the House authorities that the House should publish all replies from chief executives which are placed in the Library. The Government consider that the replies should be published regularly and frequently, so that the information they contain is current and useful; that the publication should be available to individuals and organisations outside the House on a similar basis to the *Official Report;* but that the replies should not be published as ministerial written answers in the *Official Report.* A separate weekly publication for the replies would meet these criteria, although the precise form of publication and the resource implications will be a matter for the appropriate Committee of the House, to which the Government will put their proposal at the earliest opportunity. I very much hope that it will be possible to introduce new arrangements quickly to meet the concern which has been expressed. I shall inform the House as soon as a decision has been reached.

Draft EC Treaties

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council what study he has made of the likely impact of adoption of the two draft treaties on economic and monetary and political union on the powers, activity, and operations of the House.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* The practical implications of the draft treaty provisions on economic and monetary and political union for the work of this House can only be assessed once the negotiations are complete. The Government have emphasised the essential role of national Parliaments in providing proper

democratic scrutiny of the Community's activities, and have tabled a draft conference declaration aimed at reinforcing the role of national Parliaments.

Parking Spaces

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to add to the number of parking spaces for hon. Members in the Palace of Westminster in the evenings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* There are no plans to add to the overall number of car parking spaces available to Members, which are detailed in the Serjeant at Arms' leaflet "Car parking". Any changes in the allocation to Members will be a matter for the new Administration Committee when it is established.

Works of Art

Dr. Godman: To ask the Lord President of the Council what communications he has received from the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Works of Art in the House of Commons regarding the choice of more suitable positions on the Committee floor for the sculpture of Charles Stewart Parnell and the painting, "The men who made Home Rule"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* The Advisory Committee on Works of Art, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire South (Mr. Cormack), reports to Mr. Speaker and the Secretary of State for the Environment. I understand however that, following a previous question about the location of the bust, the advisory committee did not consider it necessary to recommend an alternative location. I understand also that the advisory committee has not been asked to consider a new location for the painting.

Blue Peter Appeal

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will place an aluminium can collection point within the Palace precincts for the "Blue Peter" golden age Christmas appeal.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* No. There is a well-established precedent that the House does not allow itself to be used in support of specific charities or organisations.

SCOTLAND

Tranent-Macmerry Bypass

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will erect large yellow-backed signs indicating that the Tranent-Macmerry bypass is a single carriageway road, similar to the signs on the single carriageway sections of the road between Dundee and Aberdeen.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following the tragic accident on the single carriageway section of the A1 Tranent bypass in July, I asked the A1 steering group to consider ways of increasing driver awareness of the transitions from dual to single carriageways on the A1.

One of the measures proposed by the steering group was to erect large yellow backed signs as part of a package of measures associated with Bankton roundabout. This was approved in September with a works start programmed for February 1992.

Detainees

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at what point after sentence someone detained during Her Majesty's pleasure can first be given a date on which he or she may be eligible for parole.

Mr. Lang: Persons sentenced under section 205 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 (the 1975 Act) to detention without limit of time (formerly during Her Majesty's pleasure) are eligible for release on life licence under section 26 of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989. I have complete discretion as to the setting of a date for first formal review in such cases.

Where, exceptionally, detention without limit of time is imposed by a court in exercise of its powers under section 206 of the 1975 Act, I may release the person on licence at any time on the recommendation of the Parole Board.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the average period in detention served by those detained during Her Majesty's pleasure and released in the last 10 years;

(2) how many persons detained during Her Majesty's pleasure following conviction for murder were released in under five years, under eight years, under 10 years, under 12 years, under 15 years and over 15 years respectively in the last 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is given in the table.

Under 5	*number*
5 to under 8	4
8 to under 10	13
10 to under 12	22
12 to under 15	8
over 15	2
Total persons released	49
Average period in years	10½

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons under 16 years were convicted of murder in Scotland and sentenced to detention during Her Majesty's pleasure in each of the last 10 years;

(2) if he will list the ages of those under 16 years detained during Her Majesty's pleasure following conviction for murder during the last 10 years; and if he will indicate how many of the total number so convicted were male and how many female.

Mr. Lang: Under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 the sentence of detention during Her Majesty's pleasure was replaced by detention without limit of time. Four persons under 16 have been so sentenced since 1981, one each year in 1986, 1987, 1990 and 1991, to date. All were males aged 15, except the persons in 1991 who was a female aged 15.

District Courts

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the statutory provisions relating to the requirement for local authorities to provide suitable and sufficient premises and facilities for the purposes of a district court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 8 of the District Courts (Scotland) Act 1975 requires local authorities to provide suitable and sufficient premises and facilities for the purposes of the district court.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he received the National Medical Advisory Committee report on mentally handicapped people in Scottish hospitals from his advisory committee;

(2) when he expects to publish the National Medical Advisory Committee report on mentally handicapped people in Scottish hospitals from his advisory committee;

(3) if he will implement without delay the recommendations outlined in the National Medical Advisory Committee report on mentally handicapped people in Scottish hospitals from his advisory committee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report "Everybody Out?", produced by a working group of the National Medical Advisory Committee, was passed to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department by the Health Service Advisory Council in July 1990. The valuable work done by the working group has contributed significantly to the development within the Scottish Office of policy and guidance for care in the community for people with a mental handicap.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Scottish Homes has sought statutory powers for the compulsory purchase of its former properties in the constituency of Leith; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under section 2(2)*(g)* of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, Scottish Homes have the power to acquire land compulsorily but that power may be exercised only in accordance with arrangements made between the agency and the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend has not been asked by Scottish Homes to consider arrangements for the compulsory purchase of properties in the hon. Member's constituency.

Health Statistics

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of whole-time equivalent nurses, total and hospital figure for table 9.11 in "Scottish Health Statistics" updated for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table.

Nursing staff in Scotland: whole-time equivalent

	30 September 1990
All nursing staff	63,687·2
Hospital nursing staff	56,180·7

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of whole-time equivalent doctors, total and hospital figure for table 9.4 in "Scottish Health Statistics" updated for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table.

Medical staff in Scotland: whole-time equivalent

	30 September 1990
All medical staff	9,909·0
Hospital medical staff	5,746·2

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the name of each nurse who is an executive member of that board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Executive member	*Health Board*
Mrs. M. Durie	Ayrshire and Arran
Miss E. Hastings OBE	Lanarkshire
Mrs. M. S. Henderson OBE	Shetland

Water Pollution

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to protect the water environment from pollution by dangerous substances; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, controls on discharges of dangerous substances to the water environment are exercised by the river purification authorities under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Discharges must enable receiving waters to meet relevant environmental quality standards—EQSs. EQSs have already been set for 10 red list substances: proposals for EQSs for the remaining red list substances are set out in a consultation paper to be issued shortly, and copies of which I have placed in the Library today.

Caves

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to help the preservation of the Wemyss and other ancient caves, their carvings and paintings in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have contributed to the cost of a study commissioned by Fife region and Kirkcaldy district to examine the structural engineering problems in the environs of Wemyss caves, grant aided a design study on coastal protection measures and contributed to the cost of a comprehensive programme of casting the Pictish and other stone carvings within the caves. We have also undertaken to look sympathetically at an application for assistance, under the scheme of grants to owners of ancient monuments, towards the cost of protection works should any such application be made.

The preservation of historically important caves in Scotland is ensured by taking them into the Secretary of State's guardianship, as is the case with St. Cormac's and

St. Ninian's, or by scheduling them, as is the case with Wemyss caves. In one instance, Covesea cave, we have funded the excavation of threatened archaeological deposits.

Environmentally Sensitive areas

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he is making of United Kingdom international obligations in relation to the establishment of environmentally sensitive areas to protect species, such as the corncrake.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government keep international obligations such as the EC wild birds directive and the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance under regular review. Potential special protection areas, which are designated under the wild birds directive, have been identified among the machair lands in the Western Isles which is the favoured habitat of the corncrake. Environmentally sensitive areas are designated by my right hon. Friend under the Agriculture Act 1986 and under the EC regulations on improving the efficiency of agricultural structures to encourage farmers and crofters to protect and enhance the conservation value of their land. The machair of the Uists, Benbecula, Barra and Vatersay was designated as an environmentally sensitive area in 1988.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department is contributing, and over what period, to the research project on anabolic steroids misuse being carried out by the centre for research on drugs and health behaviour.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Office Home and Health Department will contribute 10 per cent. of the overall cost of this research project which is expected to start in January 1992 and last for 12 months.

Natural Heritage

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now announce the membership of Scottish Natural Heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 15 January 1990 my predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Transport, announced his intention to appoint Magnus Magnusson KBE as chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage. To serve as members with Magnus Magnusson I have appointed the following:

Professor Christopher Smout (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. Alan Blackshaw
Mrs. Nan Burnett
Mr. Bruce Cowe
The Earl of Dalkeith
Mr. Roy Dennis
Professor George Dunnet
Mr. David Laird
Sir John Lister-Kaye
Mr. Duncan McPherson
Dr. Bill Mutch

Scottish Natural Heritage will provide for the first time an integrated approach to the protection of our natural heritage. These appointments represent a wide variety of interests. Experience of day-to-day land management, of the use and enjoyment of the natural heritage and scientific expertise of international repute are combined with the breadth of experience and diversity of expertise of the voluntary movement. I am certain the team they represent will help SNH to achieve a productive and progressive relationship with those who manage the natural resources of our land.

A commencement order has been made which brings Scottish Natural Heritage into formal existence as a corporate body from today. SNH will assume its full powers and responsibilities from 1 April 1992. The interim period will allow SNH to undertake forward planning and to fulfil requirements in the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 in relation to the employment of staff.

Higher Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use his Department makes of information about parental higher education experience and social class in predicting demand for higher education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 November 1991]:* Our reforms in education are geared to extending opportunity for all pupils and widening access to higher and further education. We have increased the proportion of young Scots going into higher education from one fifth to one quarter over the last 10 years, and we project that the proportion will rise to over 40 per cent. by the end of the decade.

The model for projecting staying on rates takes account of parental education factors but the recent staying-on rate has been rising faster than can be explained by changes in parental education and this is allowed for in the projections.

Inquiries

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up an inquiry to investigate the composition, funding witnesses, duration and publication of findings of inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* Following recent discussions about the costs of legal representation at the Orkney inquiry, we shall be considering future arrangements for investigating social work matters.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available on the number of calls made to directory inquiries from his Department since 1 April 1991.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* Between 1 April and 22 November, 6,081 calls to directory inquiries were made from the main Scottish Office buildings in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London which have in total some 5,000 telephone users. Information on the use of the service by users in the Department's small offices in other parts of the country is not available.

DEFENCE

Defence Estate

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of all land scheduled for release from the defence estate that is currently in the hands of agents pending its sale.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The list of sites currently with private sector agents for disposal is as follows:

Location	*Acreage*
Eskmeals, Cumbria	9·000
Eaglescliffe, Carter Moor Farm	18·200
Middleton St. George	2·600
Stoughton Bks, Guildford	18·000
Waltham Abbey, Essex	200·000
Peninsular Bks, Winchester	15·000
Beavers Lane Camp, Hounslow	9·000
Ludgershall Road, Tidworth	0·470
Bulford Village, Wiltshire	0·170
Old Budbrooke Road, Hampton Magna	0·250
Montgomery Ave, Hampton on the Hill, Warwickshire	0·670
Twyford House and Grounds, Shrewsbury	2·130
Harlescott, Shrewsbury	2·000
2 Bridge Lane, Stockton Heath	0·900
Sefton Drive, Wilmslow	0·450
Ernsettle, Devon	29·000
Renney Lentney, Cornwall	59·000
Stanford Fort, Plymouth	3·400
Swanvale, Plymouth	8·400
RN Harrowbeer	2·140
Various small plots, Plymouth area	2·000
RAF Northcoates	800·000
RNAD Milford Haven	264·000
E Camp Hendon	32·540
Chilwell Depot, Beeston	53·470
Acombe Yorkshire	7·000
RNAS Risley, Warrington	22·000
RAF Brampton	1·750
CVD Hilton, Derbyshire	268·000
Cove Radio Station, Hampshire	17·000
Arrow Road, Farnborough, Hampshire	5·000
Ronwer (S), Gosport	20·000
Harefield House, Middlesex	10·000
RM Barracks, Eastney	29·000
Rafborough, Farnborough	4·000
OSSD Ruddington, Nottingham	35·000
Red House Site, Gosport	9·250
Hawley Wood, Aldershot	38·000
Bordon, Hants	17·200
Priddys Hard, Gosport	110·000
Furse House, Kensington	—
ACIO 112 Springfield Road, Chelmsford	—
Former Officers Mess MCTC, Colchester	1·600
Gibraltar Bks, Northampton	0·630
The Orchard, Dartmouth	3·200
Small Plots, Liddymore area	3·200
Woodend Street, Helenburgh	0·636
Station Road, Garelochhead	8·460
Rosneath Road, Rosneath	3·460
Linn Walk, Garelochhead	0·648
Duncan Court, Kilmarnock	0·180
RAE West Freugh	2·280
Pumphouse and land, Invergordon	—
Gordon Barracks, Aberdeen	4·000
Kingask Farm and Hawklaw Former WT Station	—
Hilton Farm Steading, Rosyth	—
Dreghorn Garage Site, Edinburgh	—
Kirknewton Former NAAFI Site	—

In addition, as at 30 September 1991 there were 1,080 former service married quarters in the process of being sold.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made by his Department for the review or audit of commissions payable to purchasing agents in connection with Al-Yamamah defence contracts.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department has not employed business agents in connection with Al-Yamamah contracts.

Accudyne Inc.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department became aware that Accudyne Inc., a subsidiary of Astra Holdings plc., was alleged to have been implicated in the supply of ammunition components to Iraq via South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department has no knowledge of this allegation.

Storage Depots

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether arrangements have been made for environmental clean-up at *(a)* the Royal Navy stores depot at Lathalmond before its closure and *(b)* the Ministry of Defence fuel storage depot at Portishead;

(2) what arrangements have been made for the sale of the Ministry of Defence fuel storage depot at Portishead.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Simulators

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to place increased emphasis on the use of simulators in military training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the short essay entitled "The Use of Simulation Methods in Training" on page 43 of the 1991 "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that the air defence training simulator at the RAF school of fighter control at RAF Bulmer will be fully operational.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: By mid-1992.

Short Brothers

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the considerations which prompted him to authorise Short Brothers to offer to supply the Starburst missile to South Korea.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not our normal practice to comment on matters relating to the overseas promotion or sale of particular items of defence equipment.

Communications System

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the study of the communications system of the Royal Navy landing platform dock replacement to be completed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The invitation to tender for the project definition of an integrated communications system for the landing platform dock replacement was issued in July 1991. Tenders are currently being assessed, and we hope to place a contract shortly.

Defence Systems

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the United States global protection against limited strikes system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In January of this year, President Bush announced the refocussing of the SDI programme towards global protection against limited strikes. The United Kingdom's approach to anti-ballistic missile defence research and associated matters remains based on the agreements reached between the then Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David in 1984 and 1986. These are set out in paragraph 208 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Military Custody

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers serving in Northern Ireland were taken into military custody in Northern Ireland since January 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Three soldiers have been bailed on condition that they were held in military custody for alleged civil offences committed whilst serving in Northern Ireland.

The statistics for the number of soldiers placed in military custody for military offences is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 November 1991

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Procedures Inspectorate

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of the work of his Department's animal procedures inspectorate in 1990; and if he will break this total cost down into salaries for inspectors, salaries for support staff, administrative costs and other specified costs, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total cost of the Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate for 1990-91 was over £1·5 million. Salary costs for inspectors and support staff were some £842,000 and £295,000 respectively. Travelling and subsistence costs for inspectors amounted to some £100,000 and accommodation and other costs including computing were some £309,000.

European Community Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office was represented at the meeting of the Justice Council on 13 November in Brussels, and will be represented at the Trevi/immigration ministerial meeting at The Hague on 2 and 3 December.

European Community (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list (i) the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information for the month of October 1991 is as follows:

(i) 51 visits were made by officials to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community;
(ii) 29 visits were made by officials to Brussels;
(iii) 76 nights were spent by officials away from the United Kingdom.

Magistrates Courts (Grant)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the level of grant paid for magistrates courts in the London borough of Barnet in each of the last four years; and what level of grant he intends to pay in 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Magistrates courts expenditure is supported by grant at the rate of 80 per cent. The grant paid in 1988-89 to 1990-91, and expected to be paid in 1991-92, in respect of expenditure by the Barnet magistrates courts committee is as follows:

	£
[1]1988-89	892,200
[1]1989-90	978,190
[2]1990-91	2,057,506
[2]1991-92	[3]1,850,338

[1] Grant paid on revenue expenditure, revenue contributions to capital, and capital financing costs.
[2] Grant paid on revenue and approved capital expenditure, and on loan charges relating to pre-1990-91 capital expenditure.
[3] Estimated outturn.

We will shortly be notifying magistrates courts committees of the cash limit on grant payable in respect of their 1992-93 revenue expenditure. I shall then write to the hon. Member. The allocation of approved capital expenditure which will attract 80 per cent. grant will be notified subsequently.

Crossbows

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for a licensing scheme to enable persons aged 17 years or more to purchase and use crossbows under safe conditions to prevent so far as reasonably practicable injury to persons and animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have no plans to do so. There is no firm evidence to suggest that the level of crossbow misuse is widespread and increasing, or that existing legislation is not adequate to deal with the misuse which does take place. A system of licensing crossbows would be expensive to administer and would divert police resources away from other operational tasks. The Government are not persuaded, therefore, that licensing crossbows—which are used by many responsible people for legitimate sporting and recreational purposes—could be justified.

Young Offenders

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often the suicide risk of young people held in young offenders institutions is reviewed; and whether it is reassessed after major events such as the death of a relative.

Mrs. Rumbold: Every prisoner is assessed for suicide risk upon reception into a young offender institution. The doctor decides at that time the appropriate immediate action and whether the prisoner should be recalled for further assessment, or for regular review. If at any time during the period in custody, a prisoner shows signs of possible suicide risk, he or she will be referred by staff to a medical officer for reassessment.

Where events likely to cause distress to a prisoner come to the attention of staff, the prisoner's behaviour and general demeanour will be monitored particularly carefully and, where necessary, additional care and support will be provided. If there is any concern about a possible suicide attempt, the prisoner will be referred to a doctor for further assessment.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any classification is made by staff at young offender institutions between suicide threats they consider genuine and those they consider have another motive.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no formal system of classifying threats of suicide by prisoners. It is difficult in practice to distinguish the level of intent in a prisoner's mind. All threats, therefore, must be and are taken seriously by prison staff. Not all prisoners who threaten suicide or who commit an act of self harm will necessarily be determined to kill themselves. But such behaviour, even where not suicidal, will normally be the expression of emotional problems which need to be addressed as soon as possible lest they develop into a more serious crisis.

Staff are encouraged to assess where problems may exist and to provide help and support to enable the prisoner to resolve them if at all possible.

Private Visits

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total estimated cost of private visits undertaken by him, other Ministers, and officials and specialist advisers, in an official capacity during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I regret that information in the form requested is not held centrally.

EC Directives

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to support the provisions of the data protection directive affecting political canvassers' powers to ask members of the public about their voting intentions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are seeking to remove or mitigate the effects of the requirements in the draft directive which go beyond United Kingdom law and might hamper canvassing of voting intentions.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to support the provisions of the data protection directive which prevent direct mailing.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are aware of concerns among various organisations about the likely effects of the draft directive on direct mailing. In discussion with other member states, it is seeking to ensure that the notification and consent provisions are modified in such a way as to avoid unreasonable restrictions.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to support the provisions of the data protection directive which would prevent airline tickets being issued across the boundaries of member states of the European Community.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are seeking modification of provisions of the draft data protection directive which might inhibit the normal and legitimate ticketing of airline travel from a member state across the external frontier of the Community.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy in respect of negotiations on proposed EC directives with respect to *(a)* protection of the freedom of the individual and *(b)* protection of freedom of the press.

Mrs. Rumbold: In negotiations on EC directives, the Government seek to ensure a proper balance between the interests of the individual and of society at large.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to support those elements of the data protection directive which involve controls over the use of personal data such as names and addresses.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are seeking to remove or mitigate the effects of provisions in the draft data protection directive which go beyond the controls which United Kingdom law already imposes on the use of computerised personal data, including names and addresses.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to support controls on the use of credit cards outside the European Community under the data protection directive.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are seeking modification of provisions in the draft data protection directive which might inhibit the normal and legitimate use of credit cards by European Community nationals in third countries.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make its policy not to support the provisions in the data protection directive involving preparation of opinion polls.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are seeking to remove or mitigate the effects of the requirements in the draft directive which go beyond United Kingdom law and might hamper the activities of public opinion pollsters.

Police Establishment

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce his decision on increases in police establishments for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: On 9 October I announced that there would be up to 1,000 additional police posts for 1992-93. I have today approved allocations for 937 police posts. In addition, 63 police posts will be freed for operational duties as a result of the contracting out of prisoner escorts next year. I have allocated 807 additional posts to provincial forces; the allocation is shown in the following table. The increases are effective from 1 April 1992, subject to confirmation by police authorities that they are willing to fund their share of the cost of these posts, where this has not already been given.

I have also set aside 30 posts for allocation to regional crime squads. Of these, 22 have been allocated to the No. 9 regional crime squad which covers the Metropolitan police district. I shall await the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary before I decide on allocations to the provincial regional crime squads.

I can also approve up to 100 posts where I am satisfied that the full cost would be reimbursed by a third party, as in the case of some airports.

Applications from police authorities for increases in establishments have exceeded the number of posts

available for allocation and I have therefore had to set priorities taking into account advice from Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary. Because I have had to target the increases on the forces which I judge to be in the greatest need, some forces have not had their applications for increases in establishment approved.

Over 80 per cent. of the posts will be deployed on operational duties identified by chief constables, mainly at constable level.

I have also allocated 30 extra posts to provincial police forces for 1991-92. These posts have been reallocated from provisions originally made for regional crime squads. Details of these allocations are also given in the table. These increases will have immediate effect.

In addition to police costs, provision has been made for more than 1,100 additional civilian staff posts to help forces release more police officers for operational duties through civilianisation. Provincial police authorities identified scope in their applications for 1992-93 for the release of some 400 additional police officers to operational duties through civilianisation. In addition the Metropolitan police plans to increase operational strength by 200 through civilianisation.

The full effect of the additional posts together with civilianisation could therefore be to increase operational strength by over 1,500 in 1992-93.

Force	*Increase approved*
1992-93 applications approved	
Avon and Somerset	2
Bedfordshire	61
Cambridgeshire	10
Cheshire	20
Cumbria	4
Derbyshire	25
Devon and Cornwall	48
Dorset	15
Dyfed-Powys	25
Essex	58
Gloucestershire	1
Greater Manchester	20
Gwent	1
Hampshire	67
Hertfordshire	4
Humberside	9
Kent	42
Lancashire	4
Leicestershire	26
Norfolk	25
North Wales	17
North Yorkshire	4
Northamptonshire	23
Northumbria	27
South Yorkshire	15
Staffordshire	4
Suffolk	17
Surrey	3
Sussex	32
Thames Valley	87
Warwickshire	4
West Mercia	29
West Midlands	11
Wiltshire	67
TOTAL	807
Additional allocations for 1991-92	
Cambridgeshire	6
Derbyshire	5
Greater Manchester	7
Kent	6
Northamptonshire	6
TOTAL	30
Applications not approved	
Durham	
Merseyside	
South Wales	
West Yorkshire	

TRANSPORT

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles he and his Ministers have travelled on British Rail during the course of their official duties during the last year.

Mr. Freeman: Over the last year, the Secretary of State for Transport and his ministerial colleagues have made about 150 journeys by British Rail while on official business.

HGV Taxation

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the situation as regards the enforcement of heavy goods vehicle taxation under the Goods Vehicles (Plating and Testing) Regulations 1988 concerning those operators involved in drain cleansing, the standards required for drivers and the recent court judgment in Swansea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The licensing and regulation of large goods vehicles (LGVs) is governed by the Vehicle (Excise) Act 1971. Classification depends upon the construction of the vehicle and its use on the public road. The taxation requirements for LGVs are vigorously enforced.

The classification of vehicles in the drain/sewer cleansing industry is complex. The issue is complicated by the requirement for some vehicles to meet the Plating and Testing Regulations 1988.

A recent court judgment has cast doubt on the Department's interpretation of the law in respect of the plating and testing regulations applicable to drain/sewer cleansing vehicles. The Department is considering whether to lodge an appeal.

Community Transport

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what grants are available for the development of community transport projects.

Mr. Freeman: Local authorities have powers to assist with the development of community transport projects. In addition, the Department of Transport grant-aids such projects in rural areas through the rural transport development fund administered by the Rural Development Commission.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *80*, what is his definition of "temporarily imported" for vehicles registered in other EC states, in so

far as such vehicles qualify for exemption from United Kingdom vehicle excise duty; and what steps are being taken to check that avoidance of due taxation is not taking place by coaches registered in the Republic of Ireland but operating full time in Britain.

Mr. Chope: A coach is held to be temporarily imported for these purposes if it is exported from the United Kingdom on completion of its journey, or otherwise, normally within three months of its entering the United Kingdom. Vehicle excise duty on a typical 50-seater coach is £207 in Ireland and £300 in the United Kingdom. I shall be pleased to consider any evidence which my hon. Friend has that existing regulations are being abused.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the amount of funding available for *(a)* traffic calming and *(b)* entry treatments along the length of the red route.

Mr. Chope: Because the red route pilot scheme is being used as a demonstration project the Department has agreed to meet the full cost of associated measures on local roads. We expect to pay about £0·6 million for traffic calming and £1·2 million for entry treatment.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received regarding the red route through Islington; how many were in favour; and how many against.

Mr. Chope: I have received several representations about the red route pilot scheme. Some have been supportive, others less so. Many have concentrated on specific aspects of the scheme and have resulted in modifications being made.

Air Traffic

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives from the Chartered Institute of Transport to discuss the growth in air traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend attended the Confederation of British Industry's transport council in July this year, though not specifically to discuss the growth in air traffic.

Rolling Stock

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority regarding the need to make a decision on the contract for rolling stock for the Leeds-Bradford electrification; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the financing of the rolling stock for use on the electrified railway between Bradford and Leeds and the Aire Valley railway.

Mr. Freeman: The West Yorkshire passenger transport authority and executive have pressed for an early decision on this project. I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to approve the investment bid for British Rail plans to improve Network SouthEast rolling stock, track availability and services on the London-Brighton, London-Lewes and London-Newhaven-Seaford lines.

Mr. Freeman: I will be happy to consider any proposal although I note that the majority of investment schemes do not require ministerial approval.

Camera Surveillance

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake to examine the feasibility of installing camera surveillance equipment at accident-prone junctions.

Mr. Chope: A number of automatic cameras are already in use in various parts of the country to detect violations of red traffic lights at junctions. Section 23 of the Road Traffic Act 1991 will allow information recorded by such devices, if type approved, to be used as evidence in court proceedings. It also makes similar provision for speed-detector cameras.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet representatives of local authorities to promote the use of surveillance cameras at traffic light-controlled junctions.

Mr. Chope: The Department has been consulting the local authority associations on the issue of guidance on the deployment of automatic cameras at traffic light-controlled junctions, and also for the detection of speeding offences.

Passenger Statistics

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has undertaken of passenger numbers on bus services following deregulation in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* Metropolitan districts outside London.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1985-86 and 1990-91 bus patronage in London increased by some 4 per cent. reflecting a general increase in demand for all forms of public transport in the conurbation.

Outside London, over the five-year period bus patronage declined at an average rate of 4 per cent. per year (19 per cent. in total) broadly in line with long-term trends since the 1960s. In the Metropolitan areas the overall decline was some 26 per cent., the bulk of which occurred in 1986-87 reflecting the changes in the subsidy regime from the previous low fare/high subsidy policies and the substantial reorganisation of services which occurred around the time of deregulation.

Rail Investment

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of gross national product is accounted for by public investment in railways.

Mr. Freeman: In 1990-91 capital investment by British Rail (£834 million) and by London Underground (£442 million) totalled £1,276 million. This represented some 0·23 per cent. of gross national product.

Railway Noise

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the Government's conclusions on the report "Railway Noise and the Insulation of Dwellings" by the committee chaired by Dr. Mitchell.

Mr. Freeman: In my reply to the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on 27 February 1991, *Official Report*, column *507*, I said that before deciding on the committee's recommendations we would like to have the views of railway operators and other interested parties. We have now considered the views received and have come to the following decisions on the committee's main recommendations. Our aim has been as far as possible to achieve equity in the noise insulation standards applying to new roads and new railways. But as was evident from the committee's report, this is a field in which there is room for different opinions.

We accept the committee's view (recommendation 1 in the report) that those responsible for new railway lines should take all reasonably practicable steps to reduce noise in the corridor along the line, provided that they are cost effective.

We accept that there should be a night-time noise insulation standard for noise from new railways as well as a day-time standard (recommendations 2, 3 and 4). We have decided that, in line with the existing noise insultation standard for new roads, day time should be defined as 0600 to midnight, and that the levels should be 68 dBA $_{LAeq\ 18\ hr}$ for day and 63 dBA $_{LAeq\ 6\ hr}$ for night. 68 dBA $_{LAeq\ 18\ hr}$ is a straight conversion from the 24-hour level recommended by the committee. In the case of the night-time standard, both British Rail and the transport and road research laboratory have carried out analyses of more sets of road noise data than were available to the committee. Our decision that the night-time standard noise for railways should be 63 dBA $_{LAeq\ 6\ hr}$ reflects the outcome of those later analyses.

We accept in principle that the detailed operation of the noise insulation standards for new railways should follow as closely as possible the system already provided in the Noise Insulation Regulations 1973 (as amended) in the case of new roads (recommendations 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11).

The committee identified a number of other items that would need to be specified in any regulations (recommendations 9, 10, 12 and 13). We shall consider these recommendations when drawing up regulations to give effect to the noise insulation standards. In drafting the regulations and an associated technical memorandum, the Department will seek the technical assistance of Dr. Mitchell and some of the members of his committee and of representatives of the railway operators. We shall also ask this group to consider further whether it would be appropriate and practicable to include a maximum pass-by noise standard in the regulations (recommendation 15), though it would go beyond strict equity with the current statutory position relating to noise from new roads.

We accept recommendation 14 (that any future change in the noise level for the insulation of houses near new roads should be matched by a corresponding change for houses near new railways). We hope to commission next year a review of the data from road noise surveys to see whether there is any evidence of a shift in social attitudes towards road traffic noise. If such evidence emerges, we will consider the need for a large-scale study to determine whether there is a case for revising the noise insulation standard for new roads. We also accept in principle that when a new railway line is opened the opportunity should be taken to obtain evidence of the response to noise from new railway lines (recommendation 17). In the light of the evidence from the various studies, it may be appropriate in due course to review the relationship between the standard for new roads and those for new railways.

We are considering the implications of bringing some non-domestic buildings within the scope of the road noise insulation regulations; any change will be reflected in the regulations for railways (recommendation 16).

We shall consult on a draft of the regulations before they are made.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Spending

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will *(a)* give his Department's actual spend in 1990-91 and planned spend in 1991-92 and 1992-93 on science and technology, *(b)* break down this total spend by programme and *(c)* distinguish between capital and revenue expenditures.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Science and Technology

£m

	1990-91 actual	*1991-92 provision*	*1992-93 provisional plans*
Innovation (Industrial R & D)	82·2	103·2	100·0
Innovation (Other)	2·9	1·4	3·7
Aeronautics	26·1	25·5	26·1
Launch Aid	89·9	−7·7	−26·1
Space	88·9	96·1	95·2
Statutory Regulatory and Policy Support	48·1	51·1	55·9
Other (including Business Development, Design and Education and Training	63·3	52·2	47·2
Total	401·5	322·0	302·0
Total (excluding Launch Aid)	311·6	329·7	328·1

It is not possible to distinguish between capital and other expenditure within the totals.

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *126*, if he will state in full the reasons he decided not to ask the European Commission for the suspension of free circulation of imported footwear from China.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am writing to the hon. Member and shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since his last announcement on 19 November.

Mr. Renton: Since my announcement on 19 November at column *123*, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of a Bugatti motor car and two vintage motor cycles in lieu of £153,000 tax. No decision has been taken on the allocation of these vehicles but the allocation of three offers previously accepted in lieu of tax has been decided. A watercolour by Rex Whistler entitled "Britannia visits the London Museum" will be allocated to the Museum of London, a portrait of Lady Ottoline Morrell by Augustus John will go to the National Portrait gallery and a collection of papers by George Bellas Greenough will go to University college London.

London Boroughs Grants Scheme

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to ensure that there is no repetition of the problems for arts organisations caused by the London boroughs grants scheme this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The inability of the London boroughs grants scheme to set a budget until well after the start of the current financial year caused havoc for its arts clients. I have listened to the many representations made to me and I am determined that there should be no repetition in future years. I understand that the process of setting a budget for 1992-93 is well in hand. I shall watch developments carefully and I shall remain ready to reconsider if necessary whether the funding arrangements in London are appropriate.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were in court or under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office at *(a)* 1 April 1990, *(b)* 1 October 1990, *(c)* 1 April 1991 and *(d)* 1 October 1991 respectively; and how many lawyers and investigative staff were employed by the office at each date, distinguishing between those employed permanently and those employed temporarily.

The Attorney-General: The total number of cases under investigation and in court at the dates stipulated were as follows:

	Under investigation	*At court*
1 April 1990	32	29
1 October 1990	27	40
1 April 1991	19	37
1 October 1991	15	42

Cases under investigation are those where a decision whether or not to institute criminal proceedings has not yet been taken. Cases in court are those in which proceedings have commenced whether or not the proceedings were at the final court of trial. The figure of 50 cases given on Monday, 14 October 1991, in answer to a question from the hon. Member at column *36* is consistent with, but calculated on a different basis from, the figures here reported. The figure of 57 cases for October 1991 counts separate transfers or committals resulting from a common investigation as separate cases, whereas the figure of 50 does not.

The number of permanent staff employed as lawyers and investigative accountants at these dates were as follows:

	Lawyers	*Investigative accountants*
1 April 1990	18	14
1 October 1990	19	16
1 April 1991	19	16
1 October 1991	19	19

The number of temporary staff in these categories was three lawyers and nine investigative accountants at 1 October 1991 and two lawyers and 10 accountants at 1 April 1991. The figures for 1990 are not available. These figures exclude the use of counsel and staff from private sector accountancy firms engaged to work on individual cases.

Judges and Recorders

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish the names of all judges and recorders practising in the courts of England and Wales, together with *(a)* their annual salaries and *(b)* whether they possess graduate qualifications in a science subject.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 November 1991, in England and Wales there were over 800 judges including district judges, circuit judges, High Court judges and the more senior judiciary. There were also some 780 recorders, a few of whom were also district judges. The names of recorders, circuit judges, High Court judges and the more senior judiciary are published regularly in a number of reference books.

The current annual salaries of judges, and of tribunal posts occupied by serving judges are set out in the table. The salaries are due to increase on 1 December 1991.

The office of recorder is a part-time appointment and fees are paid for each day sat. The current daily rate is £281, but this will increase to £286 on 1 December 1991.

Information about the educational qualifications of post-holders is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Judicial Salaries

	From 1 April 1991 £	*From 1 August 1991* £	*From 1 December 1991* £
1. Lord Chief Justice	102,950		104,750
2. Lords of Appeal Master of the Rolls	95,150		97,000
3. Lords Justices of Appeal President of the Family Division Vice Chancellor	91,400		93,000
4. High Court Judges	82,800		84,250
4a. Official Referees (London)	72,000		73,250
5. Senior Circuit Judges Recorder of Liverpool Recorder of Manchester Chief Social Security Commissioner (England and Wales) President, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales) Judge Advocate General President, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals (England and Wales) President, VAT Tribunals and Presiding Special Commissioner of Income Tax		65,250	66,500
6. Circuit Judges Senior District Judge Family Division		58,800	59,900
7. District Judges PRFD District Judges		48,200	49,100

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Partial Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason the United Kingdom voted against the continuing of consultations by the President at the January 1991 partial test ban treaty amendment conference.

Mr. Hogg: We believe that the conference on disarmament provides the best forum for discussion on nuclear testing issues. We were therefore unable to support the idea of resuming the work of the PTBTAC.

Iraqi Assets

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what means will Iraqi assets unfrozen on 22 November be allocated to the Iraqi Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraqi assets will be unfrozen only for direct payment to United Kingdom exporters of goods of British origin covered by a valid licence issued for the export of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods permitted under United Nations Security Council resolutions 661 and 687.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list details of those items that can be purchased with unfrozen Iraqi assets.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraqi assets unfrozen in this country can be used only to purchase from the United Kingdom food, medicine and other humanitarian goods as permitted under United Nations Security Council resolutions 661 and 687.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions will be imposed on the use of Iraqi unfrozen assets.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraqi assets unfrozen in this country may be used only to pay for exports from the United Kingdom of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods as permitted under United Nations Security Council resolutions 661 and 687.

Mr. Robert Serry

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extradition of Robert Serry from the Turks and Caicos islands to Tampa, Florida, to face trial on charges relating to the trafficking of substantial quantities of cocaine.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The arrest of Robert Serry was the most significant since that of Carlos Lehder in February 1987. It is of immense credit to the forces of law and order in the dependent territory of the Turks and Caicos islands that they apprehended Serry in March 1991, and that the Attorney-General's chambers successfully conducted the case for his extradition to Florida. It is a mark of the close co-operation we and the US authorities maintain in the anti-narcotics campaign in the Caribbean.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the funds which return to the United Kingdom for every £1 spent on *(a)* bilateral development aid and *(b)* multilateral development aid.

Mrs. Chalker: On the basis of the figures for procurement now provided by the multilateral agencies, I estimate that for the period 1982-89 average procurement of British goods and services amounted to £1·40 for every £1 contributed by the United Kingdom to multilateral aid funds. Because the origin of goods and services purchased under the untied element of the bilateral aid programme is not recorded, it is not possible to make a similar estimate for bilateral aid.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the proportion of the bilateral aid budget fully and freely available for worldwide procurement, and untied, between the years 1979 to the present day.

Mrs. Chalker: The proportion of the gross bilateral aid programme which was untied in the years 1979-1990 (the latest year for which figures are available) is as follows:

United Kingdom untied aid as a percentage of total United Kingdom gross bilateral aid 1979-1990

Year	*Per cent.*
1979	19·6
1980	26·0
1981	28·9
1982	25·1
1983	28·9
1984	34·8
1985	33·4
1986	25·3
1987	26·2
1988	29·7
1989	28·0
1990	28·7

ENERGY

Coal Products Ltd.

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the loan which Coal Products Ltd. has negotiated from the European Coal and Steel Community.

Mr. Wakeham: I can confirm that Coal Products Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of British Coal, has been offered a £10,000,000 loan by the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The loan will attract an interest rate rebate worth about £1·8 million over the five-year life of the loan. The ECSC requires that the loan should be guaranteed. British Coal will act as guarantor and, in keeping with my predecessor's assurance to the House on 18 March 1988, the guarantee is being negotiated on commercial terms on an arm's-length basis.

ENVIRONMENT

Fish Farming

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the control on buildings and structures in connection with inland fish-farming operations, envisaged in annex A to his Department's monthly bulletin for August 1991, will come into effect.

Mr. Yeo: Very early in 1992.

Toxic Waste Plants

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria apply to his consideration of applications for toxic waste plants.

Mr. Baldry: Toxic waste plants require approval by local planning authorities in the light of criteria contained in development plans, waste disposal plans, and statutorily required environmental impact assessments. Waste treatment plants also need disposal licences from local waste disposal authorities and these licences are required to be determined in relation to risks of water pollution and danger to public health.

Those plants involving incineration are also prescribed processes under part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This requires local authorisations regarding standards of emissions to air in relation to facilities with a capacity of less than 1 tonne per hour and for facilities of greater capacity a full authorisation by HMIP (thereby dispensing with the need for a disposal licence) covering emissions to all media. Guidance on the best available techniques not entailing excessive costs (BATNEEC) for the different types of plant is provided for HMIP and local authority inspectors.

All such decisions are subject to appeal to the Secretary of State and he also has a right to call in planning applications, but he will generally do so only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved. His criteria for deciding such cases must depend upon the specific issues brought before him by the parties involved.

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on trends in atmospheric pollution caused by *(a)* nitrogen dioxide and *(b)* low-level ozone.

Mr. Baldry: Trends in concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and low-level ozone are described in the second and first reports respectively of the United Kingdom photochemical oxidants review group, copies of which are in the Library of the House. In some rural areas, annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide doubled between 1979 and 1987. Urban areas showed no general trend. Any trends present in the levels of low-level ozone are masked by year to year variability.

European Community (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list (i) the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on offical business related to the

European Community; (ii) the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Heseltine: During the past month only one Minister in my Department has made such a visit. It was not to Brussels and entailed one night away from the United Kingdom.

Local Government Finance (Sheffield)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received of late from the Sheffield city council regarding the council tax.

Mr. Key: The Department has received two letters, copies of which were placed in the Library of the House on 14 October 1991.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make an announcement on next year's standard spending assessments; and if he will review the formula for calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has now announced his proposals for next year's standard spending assessments. These include changes to some elements of the methodology, following consideration of representations from and discussion with the local authority associations and individual local authorities.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the grants available for voluntary organisations to help homeless people.

Mr. Yeo: Voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness receive grants under section 73 of the 1985 Housing Act. I have placed in the Library a list of the 99 projects in England which are funded in the current financial year. These are in addition to nearly 70 housing associations and voluntary organisations which are being funded under my Department's rough sleepers initiative.

Water Company Chairmen

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give financial remuneration in terms of *(a)* salaries and *(b)* bonuses for the chairmen of each of the water public limited companies in (i) November 1990 and (ii) November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter on which the companies themselves report to their shareholders.

Homosexuality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the representations he has received concerning section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 have been favourable and how many have criticised the section or the way it has worked.

Mr. Key: Of the 126 representations about section 28 received by my Department since the section came into force, 37 of them were in favour of the section, 75 critical and 14 general queries expressing no preference.

Landfill Gas

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a revised edition of "Waste Management Paper No. 27" about landfill gas.

Mr. Trippier: The second edition of "Waste Management Paper No. 27" is being published today. This follows public consultation on a draft of the revised paper.

The paper gives guidance on the monitoring and control of landfill gas and its publication follows a Government commitment in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" to publish detailed guidance on waste disposal techniques. Copies are being sent to the local authorities.

The guidance takes into account developments in the Department's research programme on landfill gas. This research is continuing. Information gained from the research programme and developments in landfilling practices will be assessed for further updating of the paper in the future.

Non-domestic Revaluation

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the valuation date for the 1995 non-domestic revaluation.

Mr. Heseltine: The next non-domestic property revaluation is due to come into force from 1 April 1995.

I propose that the antecedent date, that is the common valuation date, for the 1995 revaluation will be 1 April 1993 and I will be laying the necessary regulations in due course. My decision will provide certainty for businesses and will allow adequate time for the assessment work to be carried out.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Visible Trade Deficit

1. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cumulative United Kingdom visible trade deficit since June 1987.

Mr. Mellor: A total of £81 billion.

Taxes and National Insurance

12. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his most recent forecast is for the proportion of non-oil gross domestic product that taxes and national insurance contributions will represent in 1991-92.

Mr. Maude: 37·1 per cent.

15. **Dr. Kumar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of non-oil gross domestic product non-oil taxes and national insurance contributions represented in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Maude: 34·7 per cent. and 37·1 per cent. respectively.

Income Tax

14. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of net tax yield to the Government was drawn from income tax in 1970-71, 1980-81, and 1990-91, respectively.

Mr. Maude: 31 per cent. in 1970-71, 29 per cent. in 1980-81 and 27 per cent. in 1990-91.

22. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current income tax yield from the top 5 per cent. of earners as a proportion of the total; and what was the equivalent figure in 1979.

Mr. Maude: It is estimated that in 1991-92 the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers will be liable to pay about 32 per cent. of the total yield of income tax. The corresponding figure for 1978-79 was 24 per cent.

Japanese Investment

16. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of Japanese investment into the European Community came to the United Kingdom in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The latest information published by the Bank of Japan indicates that in 1990 just over half of Japanese direct investment in the European Community came to the United Kingdom.

Corporation Tax

17. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of corporation tax for small companies; and what was the comparable figure 12 years ago.

Mr. Maude: The small companies rate of corporation tax is 25 per cent. compared with 42 per cent. at the time of the 1979 general election.

Balance of Payments

18. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest forecast for the balance of payments deficit in 1992.

Mr. Mellor: In his autumn statement the Chancellor published a forecast for the current account deficit of £9½ billion in 1992.

Economic Revival

19. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received over measures to revive the economy.

Mr. Mellor: A number. Many of them support the Government's determination to defeat inflation and thereby create the conditions for sustainable economic growth.

Manufacturing Investment

20. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual rate of manufacturing investment between 1974 and 1979; and what it has been since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

Economic and Monetary Union

21. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts on the progress in reaching an agreement on the draft treaty on economic and monetary union.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I attended the latest meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union on Monday 25 November. I shall attend a further meeting during the weekend of 30 November to 2 December.

Unemployment

23. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of the Government's economic policies on employment over the last year.

24. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effects the Government's economic policies have had on the level of unemployment over the last year.

Mr. Mellor: Such effects are not measurable. The Government's economic policies aim to foster sustainable growth of output and employment.

TESSAs

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Gloucester, 13 November, *Official Report*, column *526*, if he will review the operation of the TESSA regulations in the light of evidence that some banks and building societies presently refuse to accept TESSAs transferred from other issuers.

Mr. Maude: The TESSA rules are kept under regular review. The number of institutions unwilling so far to accept inward transfers amounts to a very small minority out of a total of 150 providers—and, of those, one has already changed its mind.

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has, or will be, represented during November and December.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I attended the meeting of the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 11 November and will attend further meetings of that Council on 3 and 16 December. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury attended the meeting of the Budget Council on 12 November. In addition, I have attended, and will continue to attend, meetings of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list (i) the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community,

(ii) the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Officials in my Department made 58 visits in the month of October to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official EC business; of these visits 46 were to Brussels. Officials spent 76 nights away from the United Kingdom on official EC business in October.

MIRAS

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated value of MIRAS in Scotland in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Maude: Broad estimates based on the regional distribution of mortgage interest relief from an analysis of the family expenditure survey are as follows:

Cost of mortgage interest relief for home owners in Scotland

	£ million
1990-91	530
1991-92	420

The percentages of mortgage interest relief given at source through the MIRAS system are estimated at 87 per cent. for 1990-91 and 94 per cent. for 1991-92.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Investment

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science under what conditions agencies or authorities responsible to his Department have the right to invest funds surplus to their current requirements.

Mr. Eggar: Bodies which receive grant from the Department are generally responsible for their own decisions about the management of any funds they may be holding.

Science Budget

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage increase there will have been in real terms between the United Kingdom science budget of 1978-79 and 1992-93.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Based on actual expenditure and provision, the science budget in 1992-93 will be 31·8 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1978-79. However, after making appropriate adjustments for certain transfers of funding responsibilities since 1978-79, including the proposed change in the dual-support arrangements, the increase will be 23·7 per cent.

Capital Spending

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out by local education authority *(a)* the bids for capital spending on further education and *(b)* the capital allocations for further education for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, respectively.

Mr. Fallon: This information could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Standard Assessment Tests

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish information relating to the aggregate results in the standard assessment tests for key stage one for each local authority area, adjusted to take account of socio-economic and other factors in the manner of the DES statistical bulletin 13/84 or other similar appropriate manner;

(2) if he will publish such information as he has available relating to the aggregate results in the standard assessment tests for key stage one by each local authority area, but in such a manner that individual schools may not be identified.

Mr. Eggar: As announced on 7 November at column *206*, my right hon. and learned Friend intends to publish shortly the aggregate results of each local education authority in England, together with the national results. Individual schools will not be identified.

Primary Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary schools in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales were built before 1900.

Mr. Fallon: The Department does not maintain a record of the age of school buildings but the "Study of School Building" published in 1977, which was based on a sample survey of primary and secondary schools, reported that, of the then 23,000 primary schools in England and Wales, 8,000 were built before 1903.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for schools in Wales.

Institut Laue-Langevin

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what conclusions the Science and Engineering Research Council has reached in its review of neutron facilities at the Institut Laue-Langevin in Grenoble and the ISIS source at its Rutherford-Appleton laboratory; how those conclusions relate to the present problems with the ILL reactor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Following its review of neutron beam requirements earlier this year, the Science and Engineering Research Council concluded that its expenditure in this area of science should be reduced by some £5 million a year from the previously planned level with effect from 1994-95.

The council further concluded that its financial support for the ISIS facility should remain broadly in line with currently planned levels. It is therefore seeking a reduction in the level of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Institut Laue-Lagevin (ILL) beyond 1993.

The council's aim is to reach a satisfactory agreement with our French and German partners in the ILL both on the question of the future level of United Kingdom participation and on the related question of a repair plan for the reactor. To achieve this the United Kingdom is proposing that the present ILL convention should be

superseded from 1 January 1994; formal notice to this effect, as required under the convention, will be given before the end of 1991.

The United Kingdom delegation will be making a statement on the United Kingdom's position to the ILL council, now meeting in Grenoble, later today. A copy of that statement is being placed in the Library.

HEALTH

NHS Expenditure

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on the national health service in each of the years from 1978-79 to date; what allocations have been made in those years to the Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority; and what variations respectively these represent in relation to the increases in national expenditure.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows changes in gross NHS expenditure in England and in expenditure—as far as it can be identified—in the area covered by Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority. The latter figures include all revenue and capital expenditure by the district health authority; the cost of capital schemes within the district borne by the North East Thames regional health authority; and expenditure on family health services, which is not strictly attributable to particular districts. Revenue expenditure incurred by North East Thames for the region as a whole and expenditure met nationally by the Department of Health and organisations providing central services to the NHS are excluded.

Capital expenditure for particular localities tends to vary year on year, mostly reflecting changes in the pattern of capital investment throughout the country—for example, in the case of Barking, Havering and Brentwood, completion of the redevelopment of Harold Wood hospital in 1987-88, and the construction of a school of nursing and an extension at High Wood hospital in 1988-89.

	NHS expenditure, England		*Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority[1] expenditure*	
	Gross total (£ million)	*Percentage cash change*	*Total (£ thousand)*	*Percentage cash change*
1978-79	6,525	—	46,318	—
1979-80	7,755	18·9	54,516	17·7
1980-81	10,103	30·3	71,771	31·7
1981-82	11,329	12·1	78,848	9·9
1982-83	12,353	9·0	85,471	8·4
1983-84	13,114	6·2	89,621	4·9
1984-85	14,102	7·5	97,246	8·5
1985-86	14,923	5·8	102,935	5·9
1986-87	16,043	7·5	108,522	5·4
1987-88	17,642	10·0	121,899	12·3
1988-89	19,587	11·0	132,211	8·5
1989-90	21,089	7·7	134,984	2·1
1990-91	23,637	12·1	[2]—	[2]—
1991-92[3]	26,618	12·6	[2]—	[2]—

[1] *Source:*
Annual accounts of the Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority and its predecessor area health authority and those of the North East Thames regional health authority (RHA).
Annual accounts of the Barking and Havering family health services authority.

[2] Not yet available.

[3] Estimated outturn.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Assessment

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting list, region by region, for magnetic resonance imaging assessment/treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Waiting list information is not collected centrally by intended diagnostic procedure or treatment.

Patients Charter

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role he envisages for community health councils in the implementation of the patients charter.

Mr. Dorrell: Community health councils continue to have an important role to play in identifying issues of local concern and in acting as a communication channel between authorities and the people they serve.

Asthma

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information he has on the morbidity associated with asthma in terms of lost schooling and sickness absence.

Mr. Dorrell: There is significant morbidity associated with asthma in terms of lost schooling and sickness absence. More than 5·5 million days of certified sickness absence were recorded in Britain in 1987-88, representing about 7 million actual days lost. Information is not available centrally on absences from school associated with asthma.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will designate the effective treatment and care of asthma as one of the first set of key areas for targeting;

(2) what responses he has received relating to asthma in response to his White Paper "The Health of the Nation" Cm. 1523.

Mr. Dorrell: No decision has yet been made on which key areas will be included in the White Paper. We have received 2,050 responses to the Green Paper. Many of these welcomed the suggestion that asthma should be a priority area for the White Paper.

Abortion

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about Medway health authority's decision to restrict the abortion service available on the national health service to certain groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received one representation on abortion services in Medway district health authority. The level of NHS terminations in the Medway authority were just below the national average —42 per cent.—in 1990 and are likely to be above it at the end of 1991.

"Health of the Nation"

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many responses his Department has received to the "Health of the Nation" Green Paper; and how many of these called for a ban on tobacco advertising.

Mr. Dorrell: Of the 2,050 replies sent to the Department from organisations and individuals, over 75 per cent. have discussed smoking-related issues. Many have called for a ban on the advertising of tobacco.

Homeless People

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will collate and publish information from the national health service, coroners courts and police services on the cost of providing emergency health care to homeless people.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table listing United Kingdom public expenditure on health as a percentage of gross national product together with comparable figures in other European Community countries.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that total United Kingdom spending on the NHS in 1991-92 will amount to 5·6 per cent. of GDP, rising to 5·7 per cent. in 1992-93. This compares with a figure of 4·7 per cent. in 1978-79. We do not have comparable figures for other European Community countries.

Vehicle Disinfection

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that commercial vehicles used for bulk transport of meat and bonemeal are properly disinfected before subsequently being used for the transport of food for human consumption.

Mr. Dorrell: The Food Hygiene (Market Stalls and Delivery Vehicles) Regulations 1966, as amended, already make it an offence to use insanitary vehicles to transport food. They also require food businesses to keep delivery vehicles clean and in good repair and order.

Information Technology

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has issued to family health service authorities on the allocation of money for information technology to general practitioner practices.

Mr. Dorrell: This is contained in "Family Health Services Letter (91)57", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Hospitals (European Patients)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his practice to maintain lists of health authorities in England and Wales offering operations and convalescent holidays to patients from European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Hospital Wards

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital wards in each health region have been converted for administrative use during each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Project 2000

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects all nursing students to be within the Project 2000 scheme in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Implementation of Project 2000 began in 1989. By the end of the current financial year, nearly 60 per cent. of the colleges and schools of nursing in England will have received approval to run Project 2000 and £109 million will have been made available centrally towards the cost of implementation. Our aim is to complete implementation as soon as possible; the precise completion date will depend on the funding which can be made available given other competing priorities.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments his Department has undertaken of the sales and production of counterfeit medicines in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virgina Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 18 November, *Official Report*, column *40*.

NHS Statistics (Sunderland)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Northern regional health authority regarding *(a)* the number of administrative jobs and *(b)* the cost of administration in the Sunderland district for each of the last three years and the projected figures for 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: Responsibility for administrative costs in local health services rests with the local district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to write to Mr. Frank Cronin, the chairman of Sunderland health authority, for details.

Traffic Casualties

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for each year since 1979 the amount of money collected by the national health service in respect of payment for ambulance services to traffic casualties;

(2) if he will list for each year since 1979 the amount of money collected by the national health service in respect of payment for hospital treatment of traffic casualties.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* There is no charge for the NHS emergency ambulance service. When patients are treated by medical practitioners following a road traffic accident, two separate charges may be payable. An emergency treatment fee may be claimed at a flat rate, currently £19·30, when any qualified medical practitioner provides immediate medical treatment following a road traffic accident. Health authorities and NHS trusts may collect this fee if the initial treatment is provided at an NHS hospital. The fee is payable by vehicle users and must be covered by motor insurance policies.

In addition, hospitals can collect charges for any subsequent in or out-patient treatment up to maximum

levels, currently £2,667 and £267 respectively. These charges can normally be claimed only from motor insurers, and only if the insurer has made a payment in respect of death or bodily injury arising from the road traffic accident.

The total income to health authorities in England from these charges has been as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	1·438
1980-81	2·723
1981-82	4·198
1982-83	5·894
1983-84	6·950
1984-85	7·324
1985-86	7·916
1986-87	7·871
1987-88	8·687
1988-89	8·748
1989-90	9·256

Information relating to 1990-91 is not yet available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidance requiring local authorities to disregard attendance allowance when determining charges for personal social services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 November 1991]:* Local authorities have discretionary powers to charge for domiciliary and day-care services. If charges are made authorities must take into account what it is reasonably practicable for an individual to pay. It is proposed to issue guidance to authorities about the use of these powers.

The Government's view is that the full economic cost of providing a service should be recovered where this can be done without causing hardship to the service user.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Downgrade

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons it was decided to downgrade social security benefits of a claimant after a period of hospital in-patient care of six weeks but to allow benefits to remain unchanged for up to 12 months for those claimants admitted to residential or nursing care.

Miss Widdecombe: Most social security benefits are reduced after six weeks of free in-patient treatment in hospital. These arrangements are based on the view that state funds should not make double provision for the same need. As the national health service provides free maintenance as well as free treatment, it has always been the policy that maintenance benefits paid from state funds should not continue to be paid in full indefinitely.

By contrast, people who enter residential care homes or nursing homes do not receive free maintenance from public funds, but have to pay for the services provided by the home. For this reason, most benefits other than income support are not affected by admission to such homes. Because income support provides assistance with the fees for residential or nursing care, the amount of benefit that can be paid is normally amended as soon as the claimant incurs such fees. However, the temporary admission of one partner to residential or nursing care may have no effect on the amount of benefit that can be paid if to pay for each partner as separate individuals would result in the couple's benefit entitlement being reduced. This arrangement can last for up to 12 months, after which time the couple are assessed separately.

Benefit Deductions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total amount of poll tax collected in 1990-91 from direct deductions in benefit from offices covering the Nottingham, North constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. Jack: The Department attended the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting on 6 November and is planning to attend the next meeting on 3 December.

Carer's Premium

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to remove the anomaly whereby people aged over 65 years are not entitled to carer's premium due to retirement benefit being counted as an overlapping benefit, but people who reach the age of 65 years with an underlying entitlement such as invalidity pension will be allowed to continue receiving carer's premium if they are already in receipt of it.

Miss Widdecombe: The carer premium was introduced in October 1990 in the relevant income-related benefits on top of all other premiums primarily to provide extra benefit to people of working age who are unable to work or whose employment is restricted because they care for a severely disabled person. As such it goes to carers who can establish entitlement to invalid care allowance. A person over the age of 65 years would not be able to establish entitlement to that benefit if caring starts after that age. But a carer who has established entitlement to invalid care allowance and the carer premium before reaching 65 years may retain those entitlements beyond that age to recognise the former limitations on employment through the caring role. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Family Credit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the proposed family credit ceilings in 1992-93 for each of *(a)* a married couple with one child aged under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged over 11 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children aged under 11 years,

(e) a married couple with three children aged over 11 years and *(f)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years and two children over 11 years.

Miss Widdecombe: At the new benefit levels proposed for April 1992 the family credit ceiling represented by the highest amount of net earnings and other relevant income a family can have and still qualify for family credit at the minimum payment of 50p will be as follows:

	£
Married couple with one child under 5 years	139·32
Married couple with two children aged under 11	154·18
Married couple with two children aged over 11 (but under 16)	173·75
Married couple with three children aged under 11	169·03
Married couple with three children aged over 11 (but under 16)	198·39
Married couple with two children aged under 11 and two children over 11 years (but under 16)	203·46

Child Benefit

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the rate of child benefit in 1987 for *(a)* first children and *(b)* other children, in current prices.

Miss Widdecombe: In April 1987 the rate of child benefit was £7·25 a week for each child, which is equivalent to £9·62 at October 1991 prices. From April 1992 we are increasing the rate for the eldest qualifying child to £9·65.

Disablement Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, *Official Report*, 18 November, column 7, *(a)* how many of the 1,367 claims for disablement benefit were successful, *(b)* how many went to appeal at a tribunal, *(c)* what was the average amount paid out to successful claimants, *(d)* what was the total amount paid out in respect of these claims and *(e)* how many are awaiting hearings at appeal tribunals.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Student Nurses

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which social security benefits are potentially available to a single nursing student assuming that the student is not pursuing a Project 2000 course of nursing, is under 25, single and able-bodied.

Miss Widdecombe: Nursing students who are not pursuing a Project 2000 course have access to the normal range of social security benefits, provided the appropriate qualifying conditions are met.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many nursing students claimed community charge benefit in 1990-91.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what minimum level of community charge would be required for a nursing student to be able to claim community charge benefit in the current financial year, assuming that *(a)* the student is aged under 25 years, single, is not pursuing a Project 2000 course of nursing and has a net weekly income of £96·83 and *(b)* the student is aged over 25 years, single, is not pursuing a Project 2000 course of nursing and has a net weekly income of £96·83.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The personal community charge would need to be nearly £595 or higher before any community charge benefit would be payable.

(b) The personal community charge would need to be about £511 or higher before any community charge benefit would be payable.

Notes:

The exemplifications assume that the single student nurse is not a lone parent or disabled. In these circumstances student nurses would be entitled to some benefit at lower charge levels.

Most student nurses will have benefited in full from the £140 reduction in community charges under the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Reduced Earning Allowance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims were made for payments of backdated reduced earning allowance in each of the past four years in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Greenock and Port Glasgow; how many of these applications were successful; what was the average payment made; and what was the total amount paid in each of the past three years in (i) Strathclyde and (ii) Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people with a net weekly income of £96·83 claimed community charge benefit in 1990-91.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that about 25,000 claimants with a net income of between £96 and £97 were in receipt of community charge benefit in May 1990.

Source:

The Housing Benefit/Community Charge Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample inquiry for May 1990. However, data for May 1990 underestimates the number of recipients of Community Charge Benefit because some people who were entitled to benefit had not had their benefit claims assessed by then.

Note:

The figures exclude those in receipt of Income Support and in cases involving couples, the income specified is for the couple and not an individual person.

Council Tax

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the benefit arrangements that will apply under the new council tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Under provisions in the Local Government Finance Bill currently before the House, council tax benefit will replace community charge benefit from April 1993. People on income support or equivalent levels of income will be entitled to maximum rebates of up to 100 per cent. of their council tax liability, rather than the 80 per cent. maximum under community charge benefit.

Amounts are currently included in the income-related benefit levels to help towards the 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge that everyone has to pay. From next April, these will amount, in total, to an estimated £680 million a year.

Following the statement I made to the House on 21 October, in which I indicated that the Government did not propose to make a reduction in benefit rates corresponding to this year's £140 reduction in community charge, I am glad to be able to announce also that there will be no reduction in the value of income-related benefit levels on the introduction of the new council tax to reflect the fact that benefit recipients will no longer be expected to meet their 20 per cent. liability for the community charge. This will mean that from April 1993, income support levels will be at least £1·40 a week higher for single people, and £2·80 a week higher for couples, than they might otherwise have been.

Generally speaking, the detailed arrangements for the new council tax benefit will follow the rules that currently apply to all other income-related benefits, including the same structure of personal allowances and premiums, the treatment of capital and the defintions of earnings and income. For those with income above their appropriate applicable amount we propose that council tax benefit will be reduced by 20p for every £1 of excess income, compared with a reduction of 15p for every £1 of excess income under community charge benefit. However, those on the lowest levels of income will gain from the introduction of 100 per cent. maximum rebates and the decision not to adjust benefit levels on the introduction of the new tax and, overall, benefit entitlement will extend to claimants with broadly the same levels of income as those currently helped by community charge benefit.

It is reasonable to assume that non-dependant adults sharing the household on a non-commercial basis with a benefit claimant should be expected to make some contribution to the council tax bill. There will, therefore, be a system of non-dependant deductions in the new council tax benefit scheme, as there is for housing benefit. For those non-dependants who are not in full-time work or whose income is below a prescribed level (£100 a week in 1992-93 terms) the deduction will be £1 a week. For those in full-time work on higher incomes the deduction will be £2 a week. There will be no deduction where the non-dependant is on income support or would otherwise attract a discount.

The new council tax benefit will be uprated each year along with the other income-related benefits. As part of my uprating statement on 21 October, columns 639-45, I announced that the Rossi index had been revised this year to align more exactly with those costs which people are expected to meet from their benefit, thus bringing within it 20 per cent. of community charge, water rates, and certain miscellaneous housing costs not previously included. This approach, which has been widely supported, will naturally entail a further adjustment to the calculation of the index for the April 1993 uprating, to reflect the fact that there will be no minimum contribution to the council tax. Water rates and miscellaneous housing costs will of course continue to be taken into account.

The new council tax benefit scheme will also provide help in respect of non-dependants on low incomes living as the second adult in households where the person liable for the new tax is not receiving a rebate on the basis of his own income. In response to the concerns of the local authority associations to minimise the administrative complexity of the new scheme, rebates for second adults will be assessed on a similar basis to non-dependant deductions. A maximum 25 per cent. rebate will be awarded in respect of a second adult or adults on income support. Lower levels of rebate will apply in respect of second adults with gross incomes above prescribed levels. In relation to 1992-93 income levels, the rebates would be as follows:

	Percentage rebate
Second adults with combined income less than £100 a week	15
Second adults with combined income between £100 and £130 a week	7½
Second adults with combined income of £130 a week or more	[1]

[1] No rebate.

The detailed arrangements for the new council tax benefit scheme will be set out in draft regulations on which we will be consulting with the local authority associations in due course. The draft regulations will also be referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee and will be subject to approval by resolution of each House of Parliament.

Overall it is expected that the new council tax benefit scheme will bring help to some 5 million claimants (between one in four and one in five of all council tax payers). At current benefit and estimated council tax levels the cost of the scheme would be around £1·1 billion a year.

WALES

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the hospital bed percentage occupancy rate for each district health authority in Wales in 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Prior to 1981, Pembrokeshire and East Dyfed DHAs existed as one authority (Dyfed DHA) and, therefore, it is not possible to give figures in the form requested. The available information is given in the following table.

Performance targets will be set for bed occupancy rates in the shortly to be published updated version of "NHS Wales: Agenda for Action".

Our target is for the percentage for NHS non-psychiatric hospital beds occupied to increase from 73·6 per cent. in 1990-91 to 78 per cent. by 1994-95.

Percentage Bed occupancy rates

	1974-79		1979-81		1982-1990-91[1]	
	All beds	*Non-psychiatric beds*	*All beds*	*Non-psychiatric beds*	*All beds*	*Non-psychiatric beds*
Clwyd	73·6	73·3	75·5	72·0	77·6	74·0
Dyfed	78·9	74·4	78·7	75·1	n/a	n/a
East Dyfed	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	79·7	77·1
Gwent	77·1	73·9	76·5	75·7	78·8	75·7
Gwynedd	79·5	77·2	82·3	79·8	75·5	74·1
Mid Glamorgan	81·1	75·0	80·3	74·8	79·1	73·4
Pembrokeshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	73·9	73·7
Powys	79·7	71·1	78·9	79·2	78·8	77·6
South Glamorgan	81·9	78·5	81·8	77·7	78·8	76·3
West Glamorgan	76·1	72·5	75·7	71·8	74·6	70·9
Wales	78·6	74·8	78·7	75·2	77·9	74·5

[1] Due a change in 1988 from collecting data on the basis of a calendar year to that of a financial year the information used to calculate this figure excludes data for the first quarter of 1988.

NHS

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new procedures and treatments have been added to the national health service in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Detailed information on new procedures and treatments added to the NHS in Wales is not held centrally. However, the NHS is continually expanding the provision of innovative services for patients and the introduction of lasers, endoscopes, new forms of anaesthetics and drugs, as well as imaging devices, enable clinicians in Wales to undertake a wider range of procedures and treatments which benefit a broader range of patients within the population.

Welsh Flag

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans his Department has to fly the Welsh dragon flag on the Britannia bridge between Arfon and Ynys Môn.

Mr. David Hunt: The flying of flags on the Britannia bridge is not a matter for determination by my Department.

Surgical Operations

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of operations in Wales for *(a)* hernias, *(b)* varicose veins and *(c)* hip replacements in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the following table:

Principal Operations[1]	*1979*	*1989*
Hernias[2]	3,703	4,787
Varicose Veins	747	2,121
Hip Replacements[3]	1,501	2,407

[1] The information may understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical details relating to patient discharges and deaths.
[2] Includes inguinal, fermoral and abdominal hernias but excludes hiatus or diaphragmatic hernias.
[3] Includes replacement of head of femur for 1989.

Compact Schemes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to establish compact schemes in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are four compacts operating in Wales, in south Glamorgan, mid Glamorgan, west Glamorgan and Clwyd. Training and enterprise councils will be able to bid for funding in respect of areas not already covered in their business plans for 1992-93.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas in Wales where business-education partnerships have been established; and how much money his Department has allocated to each of them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Education-business partnerships have been established in every county in Wales. A total of £260,000 has been allocated for operational funding in Wales for the current year, but the amount that each partnership will receive will depend on local circumstances and activity.

Maternity Confinement

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average length of time for maternity confinements in Wales in *(a)* 1961, *(b)* 1971, *(c)* 1979 and *(d)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on length of maternity confinements is available centrally only for those deliveries which took place in hospital from 1982 onwards. The average length of stay for a patient whose hospital stay included a recorded delivery is given as follows for 1982 and 1989:

Average length of stay of delivery episodes

	Days
1982	5·2
1989	4·8

Information on the average length of stay of all obstetrics and all GP maternity hospital stays is, however, available for the years requested and is given in the following table. Figures for 1982 are also given for comparison purposes:

Average length of stay

	[1]*Obstetrics* *Days*	[1]*GP maternity* *Days*
1961	10·3	9·2
1971	6·2	5·5
1979	5·5	4·7
1982	4·7	4·6
1989-90	3·7	3·7

[1] Includes cases in which no delivery occurs.

The information illustrates one of the factors leading to a reduced demand for beds in the modern NHS.

Inward Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning his recent inward investment mission to Japan, Australia and the United States of America; what was the total cost of the mission; how many firms with prospects of investment in Wales were visited on each leg of the mission; what was the additional cost to the agency of the participation by Mr. Simon Cohen of Lowe Bell; why the company visit scheduled for the United States leg of the mission was cancelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have frequent meetings with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss a range of matters, including inward investment. The matters raised are the responsibility of the agency. I understand, however, that the total cost of the mission was approximately £28,000. Fourteen individual companies were visited and group discussions with companies were held on nine occasions. I understand that the cost of Mr. Shimon Cohen's participation was £7,500, and that the proposed company visit in Los Angeles could not go ahead because senior staff in the company were no longer available.

Medical Staff (Pay)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the average pay of nurses and doctors in Wales increased between 1974 and 1979 and between 1979 to the latest available date, in cash and in real terms.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Separate information for Wales is not held centrally.

On a Great Britain basis the cumulative average percentage increases in pay rates expressed in cash and real terms for the two periods is as follows:

	Percentage increase in cash pay (a)	*Percentage increase in real pay (b)*
Nurses, Midwives and Health visitors		
1974-79	64·7	(−21·1)
1979-91	242·5	48·7
Hospital Doctors and Dentists		
1974-79	88·3	(−9·9)
1979-1991	196·5	28·7

(a) Percentage cash increases reflect full year effect of increases agreed within the pay round year (August-July).
(b) Percentage real increases reflect percentage cash increases for the pay round year deflated by the increase in the Retail Prices Index throughout the pay round year.

Hospital Building Programme

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the capital hospital building programme in Wales increased between 1974 and 1979 and between 1979 and the latest available date, in cash and in real terms.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is not available centrally in the form requested due to the delegation to district health authorities of responsibility for most hospital building schemes since 1984. Overall capital expenditure on hospitals in Wales over the period in question was as follows:

Year	*Capital Expenditure (cash) £ million*	*Increase £ million*	*Capital Expenditure (real terms)[1] £ million*	*Increase/ decrease £ million*
1974-75	13·182	—	55·348	—
1979-80	21·777	8·595	43·619	(11·729)
1982-90[2]	70·462	48·685	70·462	27·843

Notes:
[1] 'real' in terms of 1989-90 prices.
[2] latest period for which detailed capital expenditure information is available.

My hon. Friend will note the dramatic difference between the cuts in real terms between 1974-1979 in hospital capital expenditure compared with the welcome increases between 1979/1989-90.

NHS Patients

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the increase in numbers of *(a)* in-patients, *(b)* out-patients and *(c)* day-patients treated by the national health service in Wales between 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the following table:

	Change 1974 to 1979		*Change 1979 to 1990-91*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
In-patients	20,722	+6·3	132,750	+38·0
New out-patients	15,293	−3·4	122,725	+28·6
Day cases	13,140	+72·8	72,603	+232·9

The increases in patients treated since 1979 are a tribute to the staff of the NHS and the Government who have provided record increases in resources for the service.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list (i) the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside

the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, (ii) the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and (iii) the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. David Hunt: The information, which relates to the four-week period from 28 October 1991, is as follows:

	Number
(i)	9
(ii)	7
(iii)	11

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of *(a)* the number of visits made in the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, *(b)* the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and *(c)* the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. David Hunt: The information, which relates to the four-week period from 28 October 1991, is as follows:

	Number
(a)	1
(b)	1
(c)	None

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. David Hunt: The Secretary of State for Wales was represented at the Agriculturel Council held on 18-19 November and will be represented at the forthcoming Agriculturel Council on 11-12 December.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average waiting lists for hearing aids at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, and at the Royal Gwent hospital, Newport.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is not available centrally.

Statistical Publications

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of each statistical publication produced by his Department during 1989, 1990 and to date in 1991 have been delivered to the Vote Office in the House of Commons.

Mr. David Hunt: Fifty copies of each statistical publication on an all-Wales basis are delivered to the Vote Office.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to make available to the Vote Office of the House of Commons additional copies of all his departmental statistical publications.

Mr. David Hunt: It is my Department's policy to make 50 copies of all statistical publications on an all-Wales basis available to the Vote Office. Additional copies are available on request.

Housing (Cardiganshire)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses have been built in Cardiganshire during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A total of 176 houses and 37 flats were completed in Cardiganshire (Ceredigion district) from October 1990 to September 1991.

Independent Schools

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children are being educated at independent schools in Wales; what the corresponding figures were for 1961, 1970 and 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of children at independent schools in January 1961, 1970, 1980 and 1991 was 15,438, 11,166, 12,703 and 12,144 respectively.

Youth Centres

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to assist the Urdd to set up another centre similar to the Llangrannog and Glan-Llyn centres; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to say that the Urdd has been successful with an application for grant from the European regional development fund. A grant of £33,992 has been approved towards accommodation and other facilities at Canolfan centre Ifan, near Crymmych, in Dyfed.

Fuel Poverty

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies he has made of the report on fuel poverty published on 15 November by Neighbourhood Energy Action, entitled "Ten Years Cold"; what is his assessment of the accuracy of its figures; how he intends to respond to its recommendations for action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be giving careful consideration to the reports recommendations.

Homelessness

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* homelessness inquiries, *(b)* homelessness cases and *(c)* accepted homelessness cases were referred to his office between January and June 1991, by district.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is given in the following table. Numbers of inquiries relate to all contacts made with local authorities regarding

homelessness, excluding telephone inquiries. Those inquiries which become substantive are referred to as presented cases.

Homelessness activity, by district, for the period January—June 1991

District	Inquiries	Cases presented	Cases accepted
Aberconwy	77	77	24
Alyn and Deeside	145	130	114
Arfon	26	20	20
Blaenau Gwent	268	234	195
Brecknock	52	52	46
Cardiff	1,111	1,044	799
Carmarthen	39	42	39
Ceredigion	70	70	68
Colwyn	26	17	17
Cynon Valley	351	340	220
Delyn	587	379	142
Dinefwr	121	121	100
Dwyfor	30	29	14
Glyndwr	19	16	16
Islwyn	201	169	76
Llanelli	68	68	68
Lliw Valley	76	58	45
Meirionnydd	96	54	53
Merthyr Tydfil	100	100	73
Monmouth	127	127	92
Montgomeryshire	96	64	64
Neath	243	197	181
Newport	593	593	593
Ogwr	481	335	259
Port Talbot	230	199	70
Preseli Pembrokeshire	73	56	48
Radnorshire	10	10	10
Rhondda	59	54	53
Rhuddlan	78	36	28
Rhymney Valley	476	129	93
South Pembrokeshire	52	52	43
Swansea	775	534	434
Taff-Ely	349	309	138
Torfaen	635	498	269
Vale of Glamorgan	501	501	216
Wrexham Maelor	552	539	223
Ynys Môn	59	31	27
Wales Total	8,852	7,284	4,970

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons were involved in accepted homelessness cases *(a)* between January and June 1990, excluding any impact from the Towyn flood disaster and *(b)* between January and June 1991, by district.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is given in the following table and excludes those persons made homeless as a result of the Towyn flood disaster.

Persons involved in cases accepted by local authorities as being homeless under section 58 of the Housing Act 1985

	January-June 1990	January-June 1991
Aberconwy	86	64
Alyn and Deeside	189	305
Arfon	34	58
Blaenau Gwent	424	469
Brecknock	142	151
Cardiff	1,264	1,900
Carmarthen	86	91
Ceredigion	165	164
Colwyn	46	60
Cynon Valley	280	638
Delyn	518	361
Dinefwr	58	214
Dwyfor	101	45
Glyndwr	25	46
Islwyn	195	173
Llanelli	159	153
Lliw Valley	230	124
Meirionnydd	134	132
Merthyr Tydfil	273	207
Monmouth	136	229
Montgomeryshire	90	135
Neath	274	347
Newport	1,504	1,570
Ogwr	524	642
Port Talbot	162	194
Preseli Pembrokeshire	138	129
Radnorshire	24	20
Rhondda	73	137
Rhuddlan	146	97
Rhymney Valley	260	247
South Pembrokeshire	143	114
Swansea	185	964
Taff-Ely	293	365
Torfaen	775	533
Vale of Glamorgan	603	624
Wrexham Maelor	452	379
Ynys Mon	28	72
Wales Total	10,219	12,153

Employment Initiatives

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *115*, to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), when he expects the number of 1991 school leavers in south Glamorgan still awaiting places on courses complying with the youth training guarantee to reach less than *(a)* 250, *(b)* 100 and *(c)* 50.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are under a clear contractual duty to ensure that every young person under 18 not in full-time education or in a job who is seeking entry to youth training should have the offer of a suitable training place. I expect the South Glamorgan TEC to make every effort to ensure that young people receive timely offers of training and I am satisfied that the TEC has sufficient resources to meet the guarantee.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *115*, to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, what number of *(a)* Easter and *(b)* summer school leavers in 1991 in south Glamorgan have been waiting more than (i) one month, (ii) three months and (iii) six months to commence placements or courses under the youth training guarantee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

National Health Service Staff Statistics

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of managerial and administrative staff in the health service in Wales in 1973; and what is the present number.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The available information relates to staff included in the administrative and clerical group for pay purposes. The whole-time equivalent number of such staff in 1973 and 1990 is given in the following table:

	Whole time equivalent[1]	Percentage of total National Health Service staff
1973	4,574	11
1990[2]	8,178	15

[1] At 30 September.
[2] Excludes staff in Dyfed FHSA, for which figures are not available.

The number of nursing and midwifery staff increased from 45 per cent. to 50 per cent. of the total national health service staff in the same period.

Ceredigion Unit

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to confirm the present acting head of the Ceredigion unit of the East Dyfed health authority in his post before the general election.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The appointment of a unit general manager is an operational issue for the East Dyfed health authority as employer.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of how the shadow trust board for the Ceredigion health unit was chosen; if he will list the members; and if he will give their appropriate qualifications.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There is no such board.

Non-domestic Revaluation

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the valuation date for the 1995 non-domestic rating revaluation of properties in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The next non-domestic property revaluation for Wales is due to come into force from 1 April 1995.

I propose that the antecedent date, that is the common valuation date, for the 1995 revaluation will be 1 April 1993 and I will be laying the necessary regulations in due course. My decision will provide certainty for businesses and will allow adequate time for the assessment work to be carried out.

Our success in bringing down the rate of inflation means that the proposed non-domestic rate poundage for Wales for 1992-93 of £0·425 increases by just over 4 per cent. compared with just under 11 per cent. between 1990-91 and 1991-92. The contribution to local government spending by rate payers will in total increase by 2·1 per cent.

I have also laid before the House a draft order under the transitional arrangements setting the level of reductions for 1992-93 for businesses that benefit from lower rates. The reductions are 9 per cent. for properties with a rateable value of over £10,000 and 14 per cent. for other properties. The transitional arrangements are self-financing and the reductions have been calculated to off set the cost of limiting the levels of increase for those whose rates are higher.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons aged 16 and 17 years respectively, for each month since October 1989, have made applications for income support on grounds of extreme hardship; how many have been *(a)* granted or *(b)* refused; what is the best estimate he has of the number of persons aged 16 and 17 years respectively in that period who had been granted income support on the grounds of being within an exempted category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alex Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Child Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons aged 16 and 17 years respectively were in receipt of extended child benefit; how many were in receipt of bridging allowance for each month since September 1989; how many young people exhausted their entitlement to either extended child benefit or the eight weeks bridging allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The number of young people in receipt of bridging allowance each month since September 1989 is given in the table.

Information showing the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds who had exhausted their entitlement to bridging allowance in the 12-month period is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child benefit, as with other social security matters, are the responsibility of Mr. Alex Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Number of young people in receipt of YTP bridging allowance at:

	Number
29 September 1989	465
27 October 1989	374
24 November 1989	279
29 December 1989	223
26 January 1990	262
23 February 1990	346
30 March 1990	307
27 April 1990	320
25 May 1990	293
29 June 1990	277
27 July 1990	267
31 August 1990	282
28 September 1990	244
26 October 1990	223
30 November 1990	187
28 December 1990	156
25 January 1991	248
22 February 1991	298
29 March 1991	313
26 April 1991	244
31 May 1991	242
28 June 1991	192
26 July 1991	190

	Number
30 August 1991	210
27 September 1991	174
25 October 1991	153

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of category A prisoners in prisons in Northern Ireland on 1 November.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no category A prisoners in Northern Ireland, where prisoners are classified as top, high, medium or low risk. High risk is broadly equivalent to the category A classification in England and Wales. The number of high-risk prisoners on 1 November is not available, but on 22 November there were 323 such prisoners.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the new farm woodland scheme; and if he will state when the cash limit will be known.

Mr. Hanley: I welcome the new farm woodland premium scheme which will be operated in Northern Ireland under the same terms and conditions as for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Uptake under the existing scheme, introduced in 1988, has declined substantially and I trust that the new enhanced rates of premiums and the general front-loading of the new scheme will encourage Northern Ireland farmers to participate to a greater extent than they have in the past.

Cash limits will be known prior to the launch of the scheme on 1 April 1992.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of *(a)* the number of visits made in the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, *(b)* the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and *(c)* the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business.

Mr. Brooke: I have not, nor has any of my ministerial colleagues, made any such visit.

Extradition

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has been given a definite time scale for the implementation of changes in the Republic of Ireland's Extradition Act 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: I assume that the hon. Gentleman refers to the Irish Extradition (European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism) Act 1987, rather than to the Extradition (Amendment) Act of the same year. The Irish Government have assured us that they will introduce amending legislation as soon as possible and that this is being dealt with as a matter of high priority.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications to extradite for terrorist offences have been made to the Irish Republic since 15 November 1985; how many of these have been unsuccessful; and if he will list the cases and the basis on which application was made.

Dr Mawhinney: Since 15 November 1985, there have been 32 applications to the Irish Republic for the extradition of persons to Northern Ireland who were suspected of, or had been convicted for, terrorist offences. Applications in relation to five individuals were refused by the Irish courts; in other cases, warrants were returned or withdrawn for a variety of reasons, including three cases where the person sought was subsequently arrested in the United Kingdom. There are also some outstanding cases where the person has not yet been arrested. The successful cases are:

Person	*Alleged Offence*
Gerard M. Harte	(Possession of firearms/arson)
John M. Fletcher	(Theft of ammunition/ possession of firearms with intent)
Robert Russell	(Escape from Custody/ attempted murder)
Paule A Kane	(Escape from Custody)

In addition, orders for return are outstanding against:

Person	*Offence*
Robert Joseph Campbell	(Murder/Attempted Murder)
Paul Patrick Magee	(Murder/Attempted Murder)

However, these orders cannot be executed until the individuals concerned are located.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to put specific proposals to the Irish Republic relating to that country's declared intention to amend its Extradition Act 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The precise terms of any new legislation to amend the Irish Extradition (European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism) Act 1987 are a matter for the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Ireland. The United Kingdom Government have already made clear to the Irish Government the nature of their concerns about Irish extradition law.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for extradition in relation to terrorist offences in Northern Ireland are presently awaiting decision by the Irish Republic's courts.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail the assurances given to the Irish Republic by the United Kingdom Government in relation to changes in the United Kingdom extradition laws; and what agreement was reached on the issue with the Irish Republic Justice Minister at the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference on 19 November.

Dr. Mawhinney: The detail of discussions in the Anglo-Irish Conference is confidential, but my right hon. Friend has indicated that the question of setting the existing agreement on speciality in statutory form is primarily a matter for the Home Secretary and would be considered if and when a suitable legislative vehicle arose.

Horses and Ponies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many horses and ponies are shipped into Northern Ireland each year from England and Wales.

Mr. Hanley: The figures given in the table are in respect of imports of horses and ponies from Great Britain; separate figures are not available for imports from England and Wales.

	Number
January to December 1988	1,125
January to December 1989	1,360
January to December 1990	1,870

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many horses and ponies are exported each year from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of horses and ponies exported from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland in each of the years 1988 to 1990 were:

	Number
January to December 1988	790
January to December 1989	728
January to December 1990	834

PRIME MINISTER

Referendums

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions since 1979 on which Government policy on the desirability of a referendum has been expressed by the Prime Minister in an official capacity; and on which subjects in each case.

The Prime Minister: In Parliament I have expressed Government policy on a referendum on the subject of European integration. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has commented in Parliament on a referendum in relation to: closed shop; rate increases; capital punishment; restoring a Parliament and Government at Stormont; all national disputes affecting 1,000-plus workers; the future and land reform for the Falkland islanders; devolution in Scotland; and the community charge.

Data Information Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what data information systems Her Majesty's Government have *(a)* agreed and *(b)* been consulted about with a view to taking part in; what are the criteria for inclusion in such systems; whether they will be linked to the police national computer; what data protection provisions apply to them; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The development and installation of data information systems is the responsibility of Ministers in charge of individual Departments. Any linkage of data between information systems is subject to legislation or specific agreement between the Ministers concerned and to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Non-ministerial Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister what guidelines govern the holding of office as chairman or vice-chairman of a non-ministerial public body and at the same time holding a similar role or office in any political party.

The Prime Minister: Members of public boards, including chairmen and vice-chairmen, should not serve as officers carrying out executive duties in any political party.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received in favour of an animal protection commission to co-ordinate Government policy in respect of animal welfare and enforcement of laws against cruelty to animals; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Ministers have received a number of letters proposing the setting up of a small Government Department or commission with responsibility for all aspects of animal welfare.

I am satisfied that the Government's responsibilities for matters affecting animals, which involves a number of different Government Departments, is effectively carried out and that the laws relating to the welfare and protection of animals are enforced satisfactorily.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing both the latest available results from the employment training leaver survey and those for a year before in each TEC area in England and Wales and each LEC area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is provided in the following tables. The outcomes are those for people trained in the areas now covered by the TEC/LEC network and do not necessarily relate to the provision of individual TECs/LECs. Figures are not provided for some areas because the information is not considered to be reliable. Absolute numbers are not available because not all trainees respond to the follow-up questionnaire.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Bedfordshire TEC	5	11	4	2	7	—	6
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	6	14	2	12	8	—	1
South Derbyshire TEC	8	14	3	3	4	—	1
Leicestershire TEC	6	16	3	2	7	1	2
Lincolnshire TEC	6	13	4	7	9	—	1
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	8	17	4	6	8	—	2
Northamptonshire TEC	7	18	7	2	10	1	2
Greater Nottingham TEC	7	10	3	5	5	—	3
North Nottinghamshire TEC	6	12	3	5	8	1	2
Greater Peterborough TEC	8	13	4	12	12	1	1
Suffolk TEC	11	14	3	4	14	1	2
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a	—	—
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	—
Inverness LEC	74	6	1	—	—	—	1
Skye and Lochalsh LEC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orkney LEC	n/a	n/a	—	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	—	—
Lochaber LEC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayr LEC	7	14	2	3	7	1	2
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	—	—
Central LEC	15	17	2	3	3	—	3
Dunbartonshire LEC	10	17	2	5	5	1	2
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	10	11	2	4	7	—	4
Fife LEC	6	16	3	2	5	—	4
Glasgow LEC	8	14	3	2	4	1	3
Grampian LEC	20	17	3	3	11	—	3

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.

Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Bedfordshire TEC	48	9	4	4
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	42	6	5	5
South Derbyshire TEC	50	4	9	4
Leicestershire TEC	50	6	4	4
Lincolnshire TEC	43	8	4	5

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	43	4	4	4
Northamptonshire TEC	38	8	4	3
Greater Nottingham TEC	52	5	5	4
North Nottinghamshire TEC	49	5	5	4
Greater Peterborough TEC	33	8	2	6
Suffolk TEC	38	6	2	6
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	—	—	n/a
Inverness LEC	13	1	1	4
Skye and Lochalsh LEC	—	n/a	—	—
Orkney LEC	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Lochaber LEC	n/a	—	—	—
Ayr LEC	55	5	3	2
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Central LEC	47	3	5	2
Dunbartonshire LEC	47	6	3	4
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	50	4	4	4
Fife LEC	50	5	5	4
Glasgow LEC	56	3	5	3
Grampian LEC	29	5	4	5

n/a = not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Lanark LEC	7	14	3	4	5	1	3
Lothian LEC	7	14	4	9	4	..	2
Renfrew LEC	12	16	2	4	5	1	2
Tayside LEC	12	19	2	3	10	1	3
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
County Durham TEC	8	15	2	3	7	1	1
Northumberland TEC	10	12	3	8	8	..	1
Teesside TEC	10	13	3	1	6	1	1
Tyneside TEC	9	13	3	4	6	1	2
Wearside TEC	7	16	2	2	5	1	2
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	6	14	2	2	5	1	1
Bradford TEC	10	13	2	7	6	1	3
Calderdale Kirklees TEC	7	12	3	4	9	..	1
Humberside TEC	9	16	3	7	9	1	2
Leeds TEC	8	18	4	5	8	..	2
Rotherham TEC	6	10	2	6	5	1	1
Sheffield TEC	8	11	3	13	5	1	1
Wakefield TEC	6	13	2	4	6	..	1
North Yorkshire TEC	7	16	2	22	9	1	3
Bolton Bury TEC	13	16	1	10	7	..	2
North Cheshire TEC	7	16	3	2	9	—	2
South and East Cheshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cumbria TEC	7	13	3	12	10	1	2
East Lancashire TEC	8	15	3	8	7	..	3
West Lancashire TEC	9	17	2	15	6	1	2
Central Manchester TEC	9	17	2	7	5	1	2
Merseyside TEC	6	14	4	4	7	1	2
Oldham TEC	5	18	3	5	6	1	1
Rochdale TEC	8	14	1	9	5	1	1
St. Helens TEC	8	16	2	5	5	—	4

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Lanark LEC	53	4	4	4
Lothian LEC	48	4	4	5
Renfrew LEC	47	5	5	3
Tayside LEC	40	4	3	4
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
County Durham TEC	50	6	4	3
Northumberland TEC	42	7	5	5
Teesside TEC	53	5	5	3
Tyneside TEC	49	5	5	3
Wearside TEC	52	4	6	3
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	57	4	5	3
Bradford TEC	47	4	4	3
Calderdale and Kirklees TEC	52	6	3	3
Humberside TEC	41	5	4	4
Leeds TEC	44	6	3	4
Rotherham TEC	58	5	3	3
Sheffield TEC	50	3	3	4
Wakefield TEC	59	6	3	4
North Yorkshire TEC	30	5	2	4
Bolton and Bury TEC	38	5	5	3
North Cheshire TEC	48	8	4	4
South and East Cheshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cumbria TEC	48	8	3	4
East Lancashire TEC	43	3	6	4
West Lancashire TEC	38	5	4	3
Central Manchester TEC	43	5	5	4
Merseyside TEC	54	4	4	3
Oldham TEC	50	4	5	3
Rochdale TEC	48	5	3	4
St. Helens TEC	48	3	3	5

n/a = not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Stockport High Peak TEC	10	17	2	4	9	1	1
Wigan TEC	7	15	2	7	5	—	1
Wirral Chester TEC	5	14	3	6	11	1	2
Birmingham TEC	6	13	4	2	5	1	3
Central England TEC	7	14	4	2	10	—	2
Coventry Warks TEC	7	15	4	2	9	1	4
Dudley TEC	6	10	5	2	6	—	3
Hereford Worcs TEC	7	19	5	6	10	1	2
Sandwell TEC	6	13	4	2	5	1	2
Shropshire TEC	13	19	3	3	14	1	1
Staffordshire TEC	10	15	3	3	11	1	2
Walsall TEC	7	14	5	1	4	—	1
Wolverhampton TEC	6	12	3	1	7	1	4
Mid Glamorgan TEC	8	10	3	5	4	1	1
South Glamorgan TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwent TEC	8	16	2	7	6	—	2
Powys TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
NE Wales TEC	11	18	3	7	9	—	2
NW Wales TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a
W Wales TEC	8	12	2	9	8	—	3
Avon TEC	8	18	3	9	11	1	2
Devon Cornwall TEC	8	11	4	10	7	1	2
Dorset TEC	7	12	4	13	11	—	2
Gloucester TEC	11	18	3	13	11	—	2
Somerset TEC	4	11	4	22	7	1	2
Wiltshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Essex TEC	7	16	2	4	12		2
Hampshire TEC	9	16	4	5	12	—	3

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Heart of England TEC	6	15	3	5	19	2	3
Hertfordshire TEC	6	16	4	1	13	1	1

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Stockport High Peak TEC	44	6	3	4
Wigan TEC	50	5	5	4
Wirral Chester TEC	44	6	4	4
Birmingham TEC	55	5	4	3
Central England TEC	50	3	4	3
Coventry Warks	45	5	4	4
Dudley TEC	56	5	3	4
Hereford and Worcester TEC	37	10	1	4
Sandwell TEC	56	4	4	3
Shropshire TEC	30	8	2	6
Staffordshire TEC	43	8	3	4
Walsall TEC	54	7	4	5
Wolverhampton TEC	52	6	5	3
Mid Glamorgan TEC	54	5	6	4
South Glamorgan TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwent TEC	45	6	4	4
Powys TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North East Wales TEC	35	7	5	4
North West Wales TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Wales TEC	43	6	5	5
Avon TEC	36	6	3	4
Devon and Cornwall TEC	44	7	4	4
Dorset TEC	35	7	4	6
Gloucester TEC	30	4	4	4
Somerset TEC	37	5	3	5
Wiltshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Essex TEC	41	10	3	4
Hampshire TEC	37	8	2	5
Heart of England TEC	33	9	1	5
Hertfordshire TEC	39	11	4	5

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Isle of Wight TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a
Kent TEC	6	13	3	7	9	—	2
Milton Keynes TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Surrey TEC	10	18	3	6	18	1	2
Sussex TEC	6	14	4	8	12	1	2
Thames Valley TEC	5	15	4	9	10	1	2
AZTEC TEC	6	8	8	3	8	—	3
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	4	13	3	5	7	1	3
Brent, Harrow TEC	5	9	3	9	6	1	4
Islington, Hackney TEC	3	9	2	7	4	1	2
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	4	15	2	7	4	1	3
London East TEC	6	12	3	3	6	1	3
South London TEC	4	14	4	4	5	1	2

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
West London TEC	7	18	1	7	9	—	1
South Thames TEC	3	6	5	6	4	1	1
Residential Training Centres	5	16	5	1	1	—	1
Great Britain[1]	8	14	3	6	7	1	2

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey Respondents.
[1] Includes records not identified to a particular TEC/LEC.

Employment training leavers: March 1990 to February 1991
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Isle of Wight TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kent TEC	43	9	5	4
Milton Keynes TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Surrey TEC	24	10	3	6
Sussex TEC	37	7	2	5
Thames Valley TEC	36	12	2	5
Aztec TEC	45	7	6	4
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	47	9	4	4
Brent, Harrow TEC	44	11	3	5
Islington, Hackney TEC	56	3	7	5
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	50	7	6	3
London East TEC	51	7	7	4
South London TEC	49	8	4	5
West London TEC	36	13	4	4
South Thames TEC	58	4	6	5
Residential Training Centres	49	7	7	8
Great Britain[1]	46	6	4	4

[1] Includes records not identified to a particular TEC/lec
n/a = not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: Work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: Other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Bedfordshire TEC	8	15	5	4	6	1	2
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	10	16	2	11	6	—	2
South Derbyshire TEC	11	16	3	3	5	1	1
Leicestershire TEC	11	16	5	5	8	—	1
Lincolnshire TEC	7	15	4	9	9	—	1
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	10	21	3	5	8	—	3
Northamptonshire TEC	9	19	6	3	10	1	2
Greater Nottingham TEC	9	15	3	5	5	1	3
North Nottinghamshire TEC	8	12	4	2	7	—	1
Greater Peterborough TEC	5	21	3	14	12	—	1
Suffolk TEC	13	20	5	4	14	—	4
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a	—	—
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	—	—
Inverness LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a	—	n/a

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: Work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: Other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Skye and Lochalsh LEC	n/a	n/a	—	—	—	n/a	n/a
Orkney LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	—	n/a
Lochaber LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	—	—
Ayr LEC	7	16	3	3	5	1	2
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Central LEC	11	18	2	3	5	1	3
Dunbartonshire LEC	10	20	2	2	6	—	2
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	7	12	3	2	6	—	2
Fife LEC	6	15	5	1	5	—	3
Glasgow LEC	7	15	3	3	4	—	3
Grampian LEC	17	16	4	6	9	1	3

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
TEC Office				
Bedfordshire TEC	44	7	6	3
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	37	4	9	4
South Derbyshire TEC	45	6	7	3
Leicestershire TEC	41	5	5	3
Lincolnshire TEC	40	7	3	5
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	34	6	6	6
Northamptonshire TEC	38	6	4	4
Greater Nottingham TEC	45	4	6	4
North Nottinghamshire TEC	52	4	6	4
Greater Peterborough TEC	30	7	2	7
Suffolk TEC	28	5	2	5
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	—	—
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Inverness LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Orkney LEC	—	—	17	17
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Lochaber LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Ayr LEC	52	5	4	3
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central LEC	45	3	6	4
Dunbartonshire LEC	44	6	5	3
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	57	4	4	4
Fife LEC	50	5	7	2
Glasgow LEC	52	3	6	3
Grampian LEC	29	6	4	6

n/a = not available because of low number of responses.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Lanark LEC	7	15	4	4	5	1	2
Lothian LEC	7	14	4	7	4	—	2
Renfrew LEC	9	17	2	6	3	1	2
Tayside LEC	11	18	3	6	7	—	2

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
County Durham TEC	10	17	2	2	5	1	1
Northumberland TEC	20	12	2	7	8	—	2
Teesside TEC	10	15	4	2	7	1	1
Tyneside TEC	12	16	3	5	6	1	1
Wearside TEC	9	18	3	2	5	1	1
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	8	15	3	2	6	1	1
Bradford TEC	12	18	2	5	5	1	2
Calderdale and Kirklees TEC	8	21	2	4	8	—	2
Humberside TEC	10	20	3	6	9	1	2
Leeds TEC	11	22	2	5	6	—	2
Rotherham TEC	4	14	2	3	6	1	2
Sheffield TEC	8	14	2	11	6	—	1
Wakefield TEC	8	17	2	3	3	—	1
North Yorkshire TEC	10	20	3	12	11	1	2
Bolton and Bury TEC	13	19	3	10	6	—	2
North Cheshire TEC	9	17	2	2	9	—	1
South and East Cheshire TEC	8	18	3	1	11	—	3
Cumbrian TEC	8	16	4	8	11	1	2
East Lancashire TEC	8	15	3	16	6	—	2
West Lancashire TEC	13	16	2	9	6	1	1
Central Manchester TEC	10	19	2	7	5	1	2
Merseyside TEC	7	15	3	5	6	1	2
Oldham TEC	7	20	3	4	6	—	1
Rochdale TEC	9	15	1	9	5	1	2
St. Helens TEC	9	18	3	3	5	—	2

n/a = Not avilable because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Lanark LEC	50	4	5	4
Lothian LEC	49	4	5	4
Renfrew LEC	45	6	6	3
Tayside LEC	42	5	4	3
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
County Durham TEC	48	5	5	4
Northumberland TEC	36	6	5	4
Teesside TEC	49	5	6	3
Tyneside TEC	44	4	4	4
Wearside TEC	49	4	6	3
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	52	4	5	3
Bradford TEC	46	3	4	3
Calderdale-Kirklees TEC	39	6	5	4
Humberside TEC	37	5	4	4
Leeds TEC	41	4	4	3
Rotherham TEC	56	4	5	5
Sheffield TEC	46	4	5	3
Wakefield TEC	53	4	5	5
North Yorkshire TEC	29	5	4	4
Bolton-Bury TEC	34	4	5	4
North Cheshire TEC	46	4	5	5
South and East Cheshire TEC	43	5	4	6
Cumbria TEC	35	8	4	5
East Lancashire TEC	38	4	5	3
West Lancashire TEC	40	4	5	4
Central Manchester TEC	42	4	4	4
Merseyside TEC	50	4	5	3
Oldham TEC	48	5	4	2
Rochdale TEC	44	6	5	4
St. Helens TEC	48	3	7	4

n/a = Not available because of low number of responses.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: Work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: Other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Stockport High Peak TEC	12	20	3	4	8	—	1
Wigan TEC	12	17	3	7	6	—	1
Wirral Chester TEC	8	14	2	8	9	—	2
Birmingham TEC	9	16	4	3	5	1	2
Central England TEC	11	18	3	2	10	1	1
Coventry Warwickshire TEC	8	16	4	3	8	—	2
Dudley TEC	8	17	4	2	7	—	3
Hereford Worcestershire TEC	9	23	5	6	8	—	2
Sandwell TEC	9	15	4	3	4	1	2
Shropshire TEC	12	21	3	5	10	—	1
Staffordshire TEC	11	20	3	2	10	—	1
Walsall TEC	8	14	5	1	5	1	3
Wolverhampton TEC	9	15	5	1	5	1	2
Mid Glamorgan TEC	7	16	3	8	5	1	1
South Glamorgan TEC	11	20	3	4	8	1	1
Gwent TEC	11	19	2	5	6	—	1
Powys TEC	11	13	4	19	12	—	—
North East Wales TEC	9	17	3	12	9	—	2
North West Wales TEC	7	13	3	18	7	—	1
West Wales TEC	10	15	2	9	8	—	2
Avon TEC	9	21	4	9	10	—	2
Devon Cornwall TEC	10	14	4	9	7	—	1
Dorset TEC	10	16	4	12	9	—	2
Gloucester TEC	12	19	4	15	9	1	1
Somerset TEC	9	15	6	16	5	1	2
Wiltshire TEC	11	17	7	7	6	—	1
Essex TEC	7	19	2	6	12	—	2
Hampshire TEC	10	21	3	7	10	—	1
Heart of England TEC	7	23	4	5	13	1	3
Hertfordshire TEC	6	23	3	2	14	1	1

n/a = Not available because of low number of responses.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit per cent.	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Stockport, High Peak TEC	40	5	4	3
Wigan TEC	41	6	6	3
Wirral, Chester TEC	40	5	5	5
Birmingham TEC	50	4	4	3
Central England TEC	45	3	3	4
Coventry, Warks TEC	42	5	6	5
Dudley TEC	49	4	4	4
Hereford, Worcs. TEC	33	7	3	3
Sandwell TEC	52	4	4	3
Shropshire TEC	35	5	4	4
Staffordshire TEC	37	6	5	4
Walsall TEC	49	5	5	4
Wolverhampton TEC	52	4	4	3
Mid Glamorgan TEC	49	5	5	3
South Glamorgan TEC	41	3	4	5
Gwent TEC	43	6	3	4
Powys TEC	25	8	2	5
North East Wales TEC	33	7	4	5
North West Wales TEC	38	7	1	5
West Wales TEC	39	6	5	4
Avon TEC	31	6	4	5
Devon, Cornwall TEC	40	6	5	4
Dorset TEC	34	7	4	4
Gloucester TEC	26	4	4	5
Somerset TEC	32	5	4	6
Wiltshire TEC	37	5	6	4
Essex TEC	35	8	5	4

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit per cent.	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Hampshire TEC	33	8	2	5
Heart of England TEC	31	7	1	7
Hertfordshire TEC	32	11	3	6

n/a = not available because of low number of responses.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Full time job: work experience provider (per cent.)	Full time job: other employer (per cent.)	Voluntary work (per cent.)	Self employed (including EAS) (per cent.)	Part time job (under 30 HPW) (per cent.)	Other Government training programme (per cent.)	Full time education/ training (per cent.)
Isle of Wight TEC	9	15	9	3	14	—	1
Kent TEC	7	17	4	6	9	..	2
Milton Keynes TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Surrey TEC	15	21	1	6	19	1	1
Sussex TEC	6	20	3	8	11	1	2
Thames Valley TEC	6	18	3	11	14	—	1
Aztec TEC	4	17	6	5	8	—	3
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	6	18	2	7	8	1	3
Brent, Harrow TEC	7	17	2	10	5	1	3
Islington, Hackney TEC	7	23	3	5	5	1	4
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	5	17	2	7	5	1	4
London East TEC	9	16	2	3	6	..	2
South London TEC	7	16	4	8	8	1	3
West London TEC	6	20	3	11	7	..	2
South Thames TEC	4	12	4	4	5	1	3
Large contractors unit	—	n/a	—	—	n/a	—	n/a
Great Britain[1]	9	17	3	6	7	1	2

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.
[1]Includes people not identified to a particular TEC/lec.

Employment training leavers: July 1989 to June 1990
Activity 3 months after leaving

TEC area	Current activity 3 months after leaving: Unemployed claiming benefit (per cent.)	Unemployed not claiming benefit (per cent.)	Jobclub (per cent.)	Something else (per cent.)
Isle of Wight TEC	31	12	2	4
Kent TEC	38	8	5	5
Milton Keynes TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Surrey TEC	22	7	2	6
Sussex TEC	32	7	3	6
Thames Valley TEC	29	12	2	5
Aztec TEC	42	7	4	4
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	41	9	3	4
Brent, Harrow TEC	34	12	5	6
Islington, Hackney TEC	37	6	7	3
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	42	9	5	4
London East TEC	43	7	7	4
South London TEC	37	8	5	5
West London TEC	32	11	4	4
South Thames TEC	51	4	6	6
Large Contractors Unit	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Great Britain[1]	43	5	5	4

n/a = not available because of low number of responses.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.
[1]Includes people not identified to a particular TEC/lec.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing both the latest available results from the ET leavers survey and those for a year before for each TEC area in England and

Wales and each LEC area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who *(a)* had been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the ET leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is provided in the following tables. The results are those people trained in the areas now covered by the TEC/LEC network and do not necessarily relate to the provision of individual TECs/LECs. Figures are not provided for some areas because the information is not considered to be reliable. Absolute numbers are not available because not all trainees respond to the follow-up questionnaire.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between March 1990 to February 1991

TEC area	*Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)*	*Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)*	*Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)*	*Awaiting results (per cent.)*	*Completed agreed training (per cent.)*
Bedfordshire TEC	44	23	18	3	45
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	37	22	12	2	38
South Derbyshire TEC	41	21	14	6	47
Leicestershire TEC	36	15	18	4	31
Lincolnshire TEC	39	23	13	3	43
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	51	30	17	4	42
Northamptonshire TEC	57	39	11	8	49
GTR Nottingham TEC	40	20	14	6	45
North Nottinghamshire TEC	40	23	14	4	41
GTR Peterborough TEC	40	24	12	4	52
Suffolk TEC	57	43	12	2	47
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a
Inverness LEC	48	38	6	4	78
Orkney LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a
Lochaber LEC	n/a	n/a	—	—	n/a
Ayr LEC	45	28	12	6	42
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central LEC	37	21	10	6	43
Dunbartonshire LEC	41	24	11	6	35
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	35	27	7	1	52
Fife LEC	49	37	6	6	62
Glasgow LEC	40	25	11	4	41
Grampian LEC	49	34	5	10	63
Lanark LEC	43	31	8	5	46
Lothian LEC	42	28	7	7	49
Renfrew LEC	42	28	9	6	38

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between March 1990 to February 1991

TEC area	*Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)*	*Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)*	*Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)*	*Awaiting results (per cent.)*	*Completed agreed training (per cent.)*
Tayside LEC	41	31	6	4	54
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
County Durham TEC	47	30	13	4	49
Northumberland TEC	46	28	13	5	51
Teesside TEC	46	28	15	3	49
Tyneside TEC	48	30	13	4	51
Wearside TEC	47	31	12	4	52
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	44	25	17	2	33
Bradford TEC	42	27	12	3	48
Calderdale Kirklees TEC	39	22	15	3	38
Humberside TEC	40	22	14	4	44
Leeds TEC	50	31	16	3	43
Rotherham TEC	42	25	15	3	45
Sheffield TEC	43	22	15	5	49
Wakefield TEC	37	18	16	3	33
North Yorkshire TEC	37	25	9	3	54
Bolton Bury TEC	27	12	11	4	47
North Cheshire TEC	40	20	15	5	36
South and East Cheshire TEC	34	21	9	4	n/a
Cumbria TEC	37	20	12	5	46
East Lancashire TEC	29	17	10	2	44
West Lancashire TEC	36	20	12	3	39

TEC area	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Central Manchester TEC	41	21	14	5	50
Merseyside TEC	49	27	18	4	43
Oldham TEC	31	16	13	3	35
Rochdale TEC	20	10	7	4	41
St. Helens TEC	44	22	19	3	40
Stockport High Peak TEC	44	27	12	5	46
Wigan TEC	39	23	12	4	47
Wirral Chester TEC	48	27	16	4	46
Birmingham TEC	41	21	16	4	39
Central England TEC	55	42	9	4	61

n/a = not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between March 1990 to February 1991

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Coventry, Warks TEC	46	29	13	4	49
Dudley TEC	44	27	13	4	53
Hereford, Worcs. TEC	41	25	12	4	42
Sandwell TEC	34	17	14	4	36
Shropshire TEC	49	30	13	6	42
Staffordshire TEC	47	31	13	4	49
Walsall TEC	34	19	12	4	44
Wolverhampton TEC	37	17	17	3	36
Mid Glamorgan TEC	46	33	10	3	67
South Glamorgan TEC	51	39	11	3	58
Gwent TEC	49	31	12	5	50
Powys TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North East Wales	43	30	9	5	57
North West Wales TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Wales TEC	46	30	12	4	53
Avon TEC	57	40	12	5	55
Devon, Cornwall TEC	44	25	14	5	45
Dorset TEC	47	29	14	4	54
Gloucester TEC	41	27	9	6	59
Somerset TEC	28	18	8	2	57
Wiltshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Essex TEC	49	31	13	4	48
Hampshire TEC	38	23	12	3	49
Heart of England TEC	50	32	10	8	54
Hertfordshire TEC	36	26	5	5	47
Isle of Wight TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kent TEC	54	39	10	4	56
Milton Keynes TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Surrey TEC	49	38	8	4	63
Sussex TEC	45	33	12	3	54
Thames Valley TEC	30	19	8	2	56

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: Employment Training National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between March 1990 to February 1991

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Aztec TEC	44	27	8	8	58
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	36	22	11	3	51
Brent, Harrow TEC	27	13	10	4	48
Islington, Hackney TEC	31	15	12	4	43
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	29	18	9	3	51
London East TEC	38	22	13	3	49
South London TEC	34	16	15	3	34
West London TEC	39	21	12	6	52
South Thames TEC	48	30	14	4	54
Residential training centres	68	55	11	2	72

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Great Britain[1]	44	27	12	4	48

[1] Includes records not identified to a particular TEC/lec.
n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: ET National Follow Up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between July 1989 to June 1990

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Bedfordshire TEC	36	18	14	4	45
Central and South Cambridgeshire TEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Derbyshire TEC	33	18	10	4	46
South Derbyshire TEC	32	19	10	4	43
Leicestershire TEC	35	20	11	4	44
Lincolnshire TEC	40	23	12	4	44
Norfolk and Waveney TEC	51	31	16	4	44
Northamptonshire TEC	46	27	12	8	45
Greater Nottingham TEC	34	18	12	4	42
North Nottinghamshire TEC	36	19	13	4	39
Greater Peterborough TEC	31	16	10	5	53
Suffolk TEC	52	34	15	3	41
Argyll, Bute, Arran and Cumbrae LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Caithness and Sutherland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Inverness LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Orkney LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ross and Cromarty LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shetland LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lochaber LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ayr LEC	39	24	9	6	44
Borders LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central LEC	24	11	8	5	31
Dunbartonshire LEC	35	18	12	5	27
Dumfries and Galloway LEC	29	20	5	4	47
Fife LEC	42	30	7	6	45
Glasgow LEC	40	24	11	5	41
Grampian LEC	35	24	5	7	57
Lanark LEC	37	24	7	6	42
Lothian LEC	37	24	8	5	43
Renfrew LEC	39	25	8	6	45

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: ET National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between July 1989 to June 1990

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Tayside LEC	33	22	6	3	50
Moray LEC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
County Durham TEC	38	23	11	4	48
Northumberland TEC	44	23	14	7	46
Teesside TEC	43	25	14	4	49
Tyneside TEC	43	25	12	5	47
Wearside TEC	40	25	12	3	49
Barnsley and Doncaster TEC	43	26	14	3	41
Bradford TEC	38	21	13	4	44
Calderdale Kirklees TEC	41	20	16	5	39
Humberside TEC	37	18	14	4	43
Leeds TEC	40	21	16	3	38
Rotherham TEC	35	19	13	3	41
Sheffield TEC	36	20	13	3	49
Wakefield TEC	27	11	12	3	33
North Yorkshire TEC	36	22	11	3	43
Bolton Bury TEC	21	7	11	2	44
North Cheshire TEC	34	16	13	5	39
South and East Cheshire TEC	25	13	8	4	35

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Cumbria TEC	36	19	13	4	41
East Lancashire TEC	21	11	8	2	44
West Lancashire TEC	33	21	10	3	43
Central Manchester TEC	35	17	14	5	46
Merseyside TEC	44	25	15	4	46
Oldham TEC	30	15	11	4	35
Rochdale TEC	19	11	6	3	38
St. Helens TEC	35	22	11	2	51
Stockport High Peak TEC	34	20	10	4	43
Wigan TEC	39	23	11	5	50
Wirral Chester TEC	42	23	14	5	48
Birmingham TEC	36	20	12	4	42
Central England TEC	43	28	11	4	45

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: ET National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between July 1989 to June 1990

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Coventry, Warks TEC	42	24	13	5	48
Dudley TEC	40	20	14	5	48
Hereford, Worcs. TEC	27	14	9	4	42
Sandwell TEC	35	16	15	4	41
Shropshire TEC	42	25	10	7	46
Staffordshire TEC	40	24	11	4	46
Walsall TEC	26	11	11	4	42
Wolverhampton TEC	34	17	13	3	43
Mid Glamorgan TEC	34	17	14	4	46
South Glamorgan TEC	46	26	17	3	41
Gwent TEC	46	28	13	6	42
Powys TEC	31	17	9	5	54
North East Wales TEC	36	19	11	5	49
North West Wales TEC	39	29	8	3	53
West Wales TEC	41	24	12	4	48
Avon TEC	48	31	12	5	48
Devon, Cornwall TEC	41	23	13	5	46
Dorset TEC	45	23	14	8	52
Gloucester TEC	37	20	11	4	60
Somerset TEC	32	18	12	3	50
Wiltshire TEC	34	19	9	6	50
Essex TEC	43	26	13	5	45
Hampshire TEC	34	20	11	4	47
Heart of England TEC	44	26	14	4	44
Hertfordshire TEC	38	26	8	5	43
Isle of Wight TEC	62	43	9	6	56
Kent TEC	44	31	8	5	52
Milton Keynes TEC	45	24	16	5	39
Surrey TEC	49	32	11	7	57
Sussex TEC	38	21	13	3	44
Thames Valley TEC	31	19	9	2	61

n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: ET National Follow up Survey.

Employment Training
Proportion of all leavers between July 1989 to June 1990

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Aztec TEC	32	20	9	4	47
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey TEC	33	18	12	4	47
Brent, Harrow TEC	37	21	11	6	57
Islington, Hackney TEC	26	12	10	3	49
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster TEC	35	20	12	3	49
London East TEC	34	14	16	4	46
South London TEC	32	18	10	4	49
West London TEC	42	24	10	8	53
South Thames TEC	37	22	11	4	43

	Worked for qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Gained qualification or credit (per cent.)	Not gained qualification/ credit (per cent.)	Awaiting results (per cent.)	Completed agreed training (per cent.)
Great Britain[1]	39	22	12	4	44

[1] Includes records not identified to a particular TEC/lec.
n/a = Not available because of low number of respondents.
Source: ET National Follow Up Survey.

EC Directives

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those EC directives not yet adopted which have a major impact on employment terms and conditions; what assessment he has made of each; and if he will give details of the progress of each towards adoption.

Mr. Forth: Under the European Commission's social action programme the following directives directly concerned with terms and conditions of employment have been published but not yet adopted by the Council:

- Protection of Pregnant Women at Work Directive: the Social Affairs Council reached a political agreement on the text on 6 November 1991, with only Italy disagreeing with the substance of the proposal. The Council rejected the costly and damaging proposals for harmonising maternity pay and conditions put forward by the Commission. The Council's formal common position is due to be adopted at the Council on 3 December.
- Directive on the Posting of Workers (Subcontracted Workers): the Government will take a view on this directive following the results of a consultative exercise. The test which the Government will apply to the proposals will be whether they help or hinder free movement of labour and competition in the Community. The directive has not yet been discussed by the Council.
- Atypical Work Directives: these two directives were last discussed by the Council on 18 December 1990. The majority of member states indicated that they had grave difficulties with the proposals and could not support them. These directives would raise employment costs and thereby reduce employment opportunities to part-time workers. The estimated cost to the United Kingdom would be £1 billion. In addition the directives would affect the pay of 1·75 million workers by forcing them to make national insurance contributions for the first time.
- Working Time Directive: this directive will be discussed by the Council for the first time on 3 December. It continues to cause difficulties for many member states. Responses to the Government's consultation exercise made it clear that this proposal would be extremely damaging to the United Kingdom. It would impose on employers crippling annual costs of £5 billion under present conditions.

Woollen Textile Industry

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the notifications of redundancies which he has received, to the most recent practicable date, for 1991 in the west Yorkshire woollen textile industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Information regarding individual firms given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions of the Employment Protection Act 1975 is given in confidence.

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what procedures are followed in order to monitor the implementation of his guarantee of an entitlement to a youth training place for those school leavers seeking a YT place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Regional directors of the Employment Department maintain close contact with training and enterprise councils (TECs) to ensure that the business plan is fulfilled and the YT guarantee is met. They undertake detailed reviews either periodically or as need arises.

SCOTLAND

Specialist Education

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what inquiries he is conducting into the quantity and quality of specialist education for speech and language-disordered children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: HM inspectorate of schools is currently examining the provision being made by education authorities for children with language and communication disorders, with the intention of describing and disseminating best practice and making recommendations about effective provision for children with these disorders.

I have also commissioned research by Stirling university into current policies and practices of education authorities for children with specific learning difficulties in Scotland and into the provision that is made for these children. This study will embrace children exhibiting dyslexia.

These projects are directed towards establishing the quality and quantity of educational provision made for children with speech and language disorders and with other special needs.

Health Statistics

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total operations figure for table 4.4. in "Scottish Health Statistics" updated for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total number of operations performed for the year to 31 December 1990 was 517,534.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total national health service cost and hospital and community health services capital cost figures for table 10.1. in "Scottish Health Statistics" updated for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table:

Cost in Scotland
Total net National Health Service and hospital and community health services capital

	1990-91 £'000s
Total National Health Service (net)	2,982,854
Hospital and community health services capital	156,241

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of category A prisoners in prisons in Scotland on the 1 November.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fifteen.

Young Prisoners

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of young persons under 19 years of age in Scotland who are currently serving sentences, either at Her Majesty's pleasure or without limit of time; and if he will give details of the numbers and ages of those serving mandatory sentences and those serving discretionary sentences and the crimes for which they have received their sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total number is six. All were sentenced to be detained without limit of time. The details requested are as follows:

Mandatory sentence (section 205 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975)

Age	*Number*	*Offence*
15	1	Murder
16	1	Murder
17	1	Murder
18	2	Murder
TOTAL	5	

Discretionary sentence (section 206 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975)

Age	*Number*	*Offence*
12	1	Culpable homicide

Horses and Ponies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many horses and ponies are shipped each year from Scotland to *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 1,857 horses and ponies were shipped from Scotland to Northern Ireland in 1990. No livestock is shipped direct from Scotland to the Republic of Ireland.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are awaiting an organ transplant; and if he will give the figure for 1990; and how long on average a patient must wait for a transplant of a kidney, heart and lungs, heart, lungs, liver and cornea.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 November 1991]:* The information requested is not held by my Department. A transplant register is compiled by the United Kingdom transplant support service authority which is based in Bristol. However the register is not held in a form which would enable the information requested to be collated readily.

Schools Inspectorate

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to reorganise Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 25 November 1991]:* A number of changes to the organisation and operational procedures of Her Majesty's inspectorate will be made to meet the commitments of the parents charter and to take account of emerging developments in education, for example, in quality assurance at school and education authority level.

An audit unit will be established as a separate, identifiable division of Her Majesty's inspectorate. A principal function of the unit will be to collect, analyse and publish evidence about how well schools and education authorities are performing.

Inspection procedures are being reviewed and revised:

—to take account of the development of written educational plans and targets in schools, including reviews of progress against these;

—to introduce assessment of the efficacy of quality assurance arrangements in place in schools and education authorities;

—to allow targeting of inspections on the basis of evidence from the audit unit and other sources;

—to ensure that parents, through school boards, are adequately consulted in the course of inspections and that they receive clear summary inspection reports showing the strengths and weaknesses identified.

Inspection guidelines are also being reviewed to incorporate performance indicators which will shortly be published.

Training Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the work force and those seeking work are involved in youth training and employment training schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 November 1991]:* The latest estimate of the total number on youth training and employment training in Scotland, as a percentage of the civilian work force and those seeking work, is 2·3 per cent.

DEFENCE

Solvent-based Paints

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department is taking to bring specifications for new equipment into line with the Department of the Environment's policy of substituting other finishes for solvent-based paints.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is issuing guidance on air pollution standards for coating processes which will be subject to pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. One of the options considered by the guidance will be to change to

low-solvent coatings. My Department is investigating alternatives to solvent-based paints in its own particular circumstances.

Forces' Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to eliminate the effects of pension troughs in Her Majesty's forces services retired pay caused by pay restraint in the public sector in 1975-76; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The retired pay or pensions awarded to personnel of the armed forces whose service ended during the period of pay restraint from 1976 to 1978 were calculated in accordance with the rules of the armed forces pension scheme in force at that time. The Ministry of Defence has no plans to modify the awards that were made.

Oil and Gas (Clyde)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations his Department has made on the development of oil and gas resources in the Firth of Clyde;

(2) which areas, in and around the Firth of Clyde, have been ruled out of bounds to oil and gas exploration on account of military requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is consulted by the Department of Energy about proposals for licensing oil and gas development and production but no such proposals relating to the Firth of Clyde have been received since 1985. On that occasion, my Department was content for exploration to proceed in a block to the south-west of Arran subject to a number of restrictions including that no activity should take place within an area bounded by the following co-ordinates:

55 20 N 5 28 W
55 25 N 5 28 W
55 25 N 5 22 W
55 20 N 5 22 W

In considering any further proposals my Department and the Department of Energy would seek to agree arrangements which would allow oil and gas activity to take place while safeguarding Ministry of Defence interests.

Services (Redundancies)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many job losses and redundancies are planned in each of the armed services in each year to 1994 following "Options for Change"; how many applications for voluntary redundancy he has received from service personnel wanting to leave in the first phase of redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: By 1995 we expect reductions of some 8,000 in the Royal Navy, 40,000 in the Army and 12,000 in the Royal Air Force. Details were given in the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 21 November at columns 305-06.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific provision he is making to assist those members of Her Majesty's forces who will be made redundant as a result of "Options for Change" to find future employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Resettlement services provided to assist service personnel to prepare for civilian life, including finding civilian employment, will be available to all those being made redundant. In addition to individual advice and counselling, these services include briefings on job finding and on a wide range of specific second careers; opportunities to undertake short familiarisation attachments with civilian organisations; 28 days pre-release vocational training in any of a large number of skills and disciplines which are useful in the civilian labour market; and assistance with job placement from our own employment unit, as well as from the Officers Association and the Regular Forces Employment Association, both of which receive financial support from the Ministry of Defence. We are making the necessary financial provision to cover the increase in demand for these services. Those leaving the regular forces also have access to Department of Employment services and facilities, including access to some programmes without the standard qualifying period of unemployment.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial advice and assistance he is giving to those members of Her Majesty's forces who will lose their jobs and receive redundancy payments as a consequence of "Options for Change"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The resettlement package includes the opportunity to attend one-day briefings specifically on financial aspects. These cover pay, pensions, insurance, investments and housing. Some additional briefings are being arranged to help meet the increased demand expected to arise from those being made redundant. In addition, in the Army further financial aspects briefings will be provided worldwide on a road-show basis, starting in March 1992. These will be specifically geared to the needs of those being made redundant, and all such personnel will be actively encouraged to attend.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much in cash and constant prices has been spent on the resettlement service in each year since 1987-88 in each of the armed forces; and how much is projected to be spent in the period up to 1994.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested.

Human Rights

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his oral answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column 126, if he will make it his policy to take into account the human rights records of Governments when deciding to whom his Ministry will sell surplus aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: This has always been our policy.

Overseas Forces (Gifts)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy towards gifts sent by members of the public to British forces while engaged in service overseas;

(2) how many sales there have been to civilians in the Falklands of the contents of gift parcels sent to British forces in the Gulf during Operation Granby; who took the decision to make such sales; what were the proceeds of such sales; and how were the proceeds applied.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The BFPO 3000 appeal produced a most generous response from the public. I announced the winding-up of the appeal on 28 March 1991 at columns 571-72, indicating that some residual items would be sent to service personnel in overseas locations other than the Gulf. Items were sent to the Falkland islands and were distributed to service personnel in the garrison. Some surplus remained. Rather than return or destroy them, the Department decided to sell them locally, raising over £2,000 for the Gulf trust.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many gift parcels were sent by members of the public to British forces serving in the Gulf during Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is estimated that up to 190,000 parcels were sent in response to the BFPO 3000 appeal.

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the deployment of the United Kingdom's Trident nuclear missile with the same number of warheads as the present Polaris missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Trident must be able to overcome defences that did not exist when Polaris entered service, and remain a credible deterrent well into the next century.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much money would be saved on the contract on the fourth Trident submarine if it were cancelled on *(a)* 22 January 1992, *(b)* 22 February 1992, *(c)* 22 March 1992, *(d)* 22 April 1992, *(e)* 22 May 1992 or *(f)* 22 june 1992;

(2) how much money to date has been spent on the fourth Trident submarine; and how much will have been spent by *(a)* 22 January 1992, *(b)* 22 February 1992, *(c)* 22 March 1992, *(d)* 22 April 1992, *(e)* 22 May 1992, *(f)* 22 June 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Expenditure to date on the fourth submarine is approximately £142 million. Future levels of expenditure are subject to considerations of commercial confidentiality. The level of savings which would be achieved if the contract were to be cancelled on any of the dates specified by the hon. Member would not differ significantly from the broad estimate of £400 million given to the House by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 22 November 1991 at column 600.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce a contract for the production of a fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The order will be announced when negotiations with the contractor have been successfully concluded.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total estimated cost of the fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The cost of the fourth Vanguard class submarine will not be known until negotiations with the contractor have been successfully concluded. It would not be appropriate to publish an estimated cost while those negotiations are in progress.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision is being made in the testing programme for Trident nuclear weapons to ensure that accidental detonation cannot take place to weapons in transit, storage or deployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The safety of our nuclear weapons is paramount. Both the Trident missile and its warhead will undergo a comprehensive series of trials, assessments and formal safety approval procedures before entering service with the Royal Navy.

Polaris

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the effectiveness of the Polaris nuclear deterrent of the recently upgraded Soviet anti-ballistic missile system around Moscow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The programme of improvements to the Soviet anit-ballistic missile system reinforces the need for Polaris to be replaced by Trident in the mid-1990s, to ensure that the British strategic nuclear deterrent remains credible well into the next century.

Nuclear Deterrent

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 13 November, column *614*, what are the implications of the negotiated deployment of strategic defences for the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: President Bush made it clear in his statement of 27 September that he is seeking the limited deployment of non-nuclear defences to protect against limited ballistic missile strikes without undermining the credibility of existing deterrent forces.

Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's assessment as to when the United States SLAT missile will come into operational service;

(2) what is his Department's assessment as to when the French ASLP missile will come into operational service.

Mr. Archie Hamiliton: This is a matter for the Governments concerned.

Warminster Infantry School

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to move the school of infantry from Warminster to Brecon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aim of restructuring the Army's training base is to make optimum use of existing sites by concentrating training at a smaller number of larger establishments. The locations for initial training in the Army remain under study and no final decisions have yet been taken.

Defence Programmes

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total estimated cost of *(a)* the GWS 26 MOD 1 Sea Wolf vertical launch missiles ship system, *(b)* the GWS MOD 2 lightweight Sea Wolf ship system, *(c)* the

Spearfish torpedo programme, *(d)* the TRIGAT medium-range missile programme, *(e)* the Rapier field standard C programme and *(f)* the EH101 helicopter programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimated total procurement costs, at 1990-91 average outturn prices, and not including in-service support costs, are as follows:

		£ million
(a)	GWS 26 Vertical Launch Sea Wolf missile system	1,160
(b)	Spearfish torpedo	1,300
(c)	TRIGAT Medium Range missile	920
(d)	Rapier Field Standard C	1,700
(e)	EH 101 ASW Helicopter	3,200

There are no present plans to procure lightweight Sea Wolf.

Infantry Regiment, Crickhowell

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for stationing an infantry regiment permanently at Cwrt Y Gollen camp, Crickhowell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are examining a number of options for the future accommodation of United Kingdom-based troops. Some accommodation will be required for units returning from abroad, but detailed decisions have yet to be made.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the policy of the British Government on the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO's new strategic concept confirms the need to maintain an appropriate mix of conventional and nuclear forces for the forseeable future. For as long as we need to retain nuclear weapons to deter war, we will need to conduct nuclear tests to ensure that our weapons are safe, reliable and up-to-date.

A comprehensive test ban treaty therefore remains a long-term goal. Progress towards it can be made only by a step-by-step approach, taking account of developments elsewhere, especially in arms control. Any treaty in this field will have to address the enormous verification problems. We are therefore taking a leading role in the conference on disarmament in Geneva, which is considering a verification regime covering nuclear tests.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE have been confirmed in each calendar year from 1987 and to date for the current year.

Mr. Maclean: The number of confirmed cases in Great Britain, by the date of onset of clinical signs of the disease, is as follows:

Year	*Number of confirmed cases*
1987	460
1988	3,038
1989	7,614
1990	14,332
[1]1991	15,698

[1] Up to 15 November.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases in total of BSE have been confirmed to date in *(a)* Dyfed, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Great Britain.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

	Number of confirmed cases[1]
Dyfed	1,834
Wales	3,290
Great Britain	41,142

[1] To 15 November 1991.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's latest assessment as to when the incidence of BSE will reach its peak and by what date it will fade out.

Mr. Maclean: Because of the long incubation period of BSE it is impossible to predict accurately when we will see a decline in cases appearing. Nevertheless it is now over three years since the most likely source of infection was cut off by means of banning, from July 1988, the feeding of ruminant protein to cattle and other ruminants.

The number of cases arising from infection prior to that date will continue to increase for some time. We would expect however to see a decline in the number of confirmed cases some time next year, provided that other routes of transmission do not play a significant part in the epidemiology of the disease.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for licences under section 4 of the Badgers Act 1991 he has received; how many such applications he has approved; what procedures he has laid down for dealing with such applications; what criteria he uses in determining such applications; and if he will make a statement on the operation of the Act.

Mr. Maclean: As at 23 November, the Department had received 23 applications for licences under section 4 of the Badgers Act 1991, and one licence has been granted. The Government are currently considering the criteria to be laid down for the granting of licences by the agriculture departments. Until these criteria have been decided licences are being issued only where there is a serious risk to public safety or to animal health.

Food Sabotage

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he plans to have with food manufacturers on the subject of food contamination or sabotage; and what measures he will take to combat this type of crime.

Mr. Maclean: We have already set up arrangements to ensure close contact with the food industry, other

interested Government Departments, enforcement authorities and the police when incidents of this type occur. Our chief concern is possible risks to the public, and I am confident that food manufacturers and retailers are aware of the need to have well-prepared plans for co-ordinated action to minimise these. Guidance on drawing up such plans has recently been issued by the relevant trade associations. The question of crime is a matter for the police.

Beef

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of beef from intervention meat have been used in *(a)* schools and *(b)* hospitals in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Curry: None.

Energy Technology

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department was represented at the seminar on wind energy and agriculture held at the national agriculture centre on 20 November under the auspices of the energy technology support unit.

Mr. Curry: Yes.

Lindane

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides' report on the use of lindane wood preservative will be published.

Mr. Maclean: Advice on lindane is expected from the Advisory Committee on Pesticides in the first part of 1992; the evaluation document will then be published.

"Our Farming Future"

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total cost of producing and distributing "Our Farming Future".

Mr. Curry: The cost of the design, production, printing, storage and distribution of "Our Farming Future" is estimated to have been £48,000.

EC Meetings

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the EC Ministerial Council meetings at which his Department has or will be represented during November and December.

Mr. Curry: This Department was represented at the Agriculture Council meeting on 18 and 19 November, and will be represented at the Agriculture Council on 11 and 12 December and the Fisheries Council on 17 and 18 December. An additional meeting of the Agriculture Council may be convened in December, but no date has yet been fixed.

EC (Visits)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list for himself, and for each of the Ministers at his Department, details of *(a)* the number of visits made in the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, *(b)* the number of visits made to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and *(c)* the number of nights spent over the past month away from the United Kingdom on official European Community business;

(2) if he will list the number of visits made by officials in his Department during the past month to destinations outside the United Kingdom but within the European Community on official business related to the European Community, the number of visits made by officials in his Department to Brussels within the past month on official business related to the European Community and the number of nights spent by officials in his Department over the past month away from the United Kingdom official European Community business.

Mr. Curry: The total number of official visits from this Department to other EC countries on Community business in the month of October 1991 was 257, of which 214 were in Brussels. The total number of individual nights spent away at official expense to complete this business was 316. These figures include both Ministers and officials; I regret that they cannot be broken down further without incurring disproportionate expense.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1990-91 and 1991-92 by the Intervention Board executive agency and the Ministry of Agriculture on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: Details are given as follows of the outturn for 1990-91 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1991-92.

£ million

	1990-91 (actual outturn)	*1991-92 (forecast outturn)*
Price guarantees		
Potatoes	—	—
Wool	18·2	34·9
Assistance to the egg industry	0·1	—
TOTAL	18·3	34·9
Support for capital and other improvements		
Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme (EC)	3·2	6·3
Agriculture Improvement Scheme (EC)	13·3	10·2
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme	12·2	7·7
Farm Structures	0·3	0·3
Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme	—	—
Agriculture Improvement Scheme (National)	0·9	0·3
Northern Ireland Agriculture Development Programme	7·0	8·3
Farm Woodland Scheme	1·0	2·1
Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme (National)	32·1	33·8
Guidance Premiums	0·1	0·1
Farm Accounts	0·2	0·3
Other	0·2	0·4
TOTAL	70·5	69·8
Support for agriculture in special areas		
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	130·4	159·3

	1990-91 (actual outturn)	1991-92 (forecast outturn)
Additional benefit under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIS (EC), AIS (National), FCGS (EC) and FCGS (National)	18·6	19·8
Others	10·1	11·3
TOTAL	159·1	190·4
Other Payments		
Set-Aside Scheme	19·1	27·4
Milk Outgoers Scheme	0·8	0·7
Crofting Building Grants and Loans (net)	3·3	4·2
Sheep Compensation Scheme 1986	0·9	1·0
Storm Damage Recovery Scheme 1987	0·4	—
Cooperation Grants	0·9	1·2
Farm Diversification—		
Capital Grants	2·8	3·0
Marketing and Feasibility Grants	0·1	0·4
Nitrate Sensitive Areas Scheme	0·3	0·9
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	9·4	11·6
Extensification	—	0·4
Other	1·0	1·2
TOTAL	39·0	52·0
GRAND TOTAL	286·9	347·1

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European Community. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1991-92, £81 million is expected to be received from the fund compared with £52 million in 1990-91.

Horses and Ponies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of welfare arrangements for horses and ponies shipped from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of any particular problems associated with the welfare of horses and ponies shipped from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many horses and ponies are shipped each year to the Republic of Ireland from England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Figures for United Kingdom exports to the Republic of Ireland are given below. Separate totals for exports from England and Wales are not available.

1990

	Number	Value £
Horses and ponies	3,238	62,178,031

Source: HM Customs and Excise

Suckler Cows

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that British beef producers will benefit fully from the proposals of the Commission to make a further 20 ecu per head available to suckler cow producers in this marketing year.

Mr. Curry: The Council of Ministers has yet to take a decision on the Commission's proposal.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what percentage farmers net returns have risen in the United Kingdom since 1980; what information he has on comparable returns in each of the other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The most recent assessment of aggregate total income from farming in the United Kingdom, in current prices, indicates an increase of around 55 per cent. between 1980 and 1990. When expressed in real terms and per annual work unit, this measure of income fell by a little over 5 per cent. between 1980 and 1990. This latter definition corresponds to an income indicator—"indicator 3"—published by Eurostat for the member states, changes in which are shown in the table. These include forecasts for 1990 made one year ago and are subject to revision.

Real [1] net income from agricultural activity of family labour input per annual work unit (Indicator 3): percentage change between 1980 and 1990 (forecast)

	Percent
Belgium	+7·3
Denmark [2]	+242·7
Germany	+34·7
Greece	+27·2
Spain	+40·1
France	+29·3
Ireland	+62·9
Italy	−32·2
Luxembourg	+70·3
Netherlands	+82·5
Portugal	−5·9

Source: Eurostat

Notes:

[1] Figures have been expressed in real terms using the GDP deflator.

[2] Incomes in Denmark were particularly low in 1980.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 November 1991

TRANSPORT

Bus Companies

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the number of bus companies in the United Kingdom for each year since 1985 and the number of mergers and takeovers of bus companies for each year since 1985.

Mr. Freeman: The approximate numbers of bus and coach operators in Great Britain are given in the table. The Department of Transport does not collect this information for Northern Ireland.

	Number
March 1986	5,800
March 1987	5,900
March 1988	5,900
March 1989	6,000
March 1990	6,200
March 1991	6,400

These figures are based on the total number of PSV operators' licences issued by the traffic area offices. There is considerable uncertainty about the number of smaller operators because of the high rate at which such operators enter and leave the industry.

A comprehensive register of mergers and takeovers is not maintained by the Department. However, table 10.3 in the recently published transport statistics report "Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain 1990/91" illustrates the increasing importance of consortia in the provision of local bus services.

Light Railways

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many light railways or tramways are now under construction or planned in the United Kingdom; and what funding and grants are available for constructing them.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Light railways are under construction in Manchester and Sheffield and some 40 other light rapid transit schemes have been proposed or are being considered. We are prepared to grant-aid worth while schemes under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 subject to the availability of resources.

Community Transport

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the Mobility Alliance to discuss the development of community transport projects.

Mr. Freeman: My Department works closely with the Mobility Alliance on all aspects of community transport operations.

In addition, we fund the Community Transport Association's information and advice service which provides valuable advice to many community transport groups around the country.

Northern Line

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investment proposals London Regional Transport has for improving the Northern line.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that improvements to stations at the southern end of the Northern line costing around £45 million are likely to be in London Underground's investment programme over the next three years, as are major track and structural renewals throughout the system, amounting to some £55 million. During 1992-93, London Underground intends to spend around £10 million on escalator refurbishments, including those at Clapham North, Clapham South, Tooting Broadway and Tooting Bec. The modernisation of the Northern line remains London Underground's next major line improvement priority after the Central line scheme is completed in 1995.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Commission

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the terms of reference for the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Portillo: Clause 13 of the Local Government Bill provides for the Local Government Commission to recommend the structural, boundary or electoral changes which appear to it desirable, having regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to secure effective and convenient local government.

A paper on the Government's draft guidance to the Local Government Commission for England was issued for consultation on 25 November. Copies were sent to the local authority associations and other interested organisations and placed in the Library.

European Charter

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to ratify the European charter for local government.

Mr. Portillo: The Government do not intend to sign the European charter of local self-government. Local government is not a suitable subject for regulation by an international convention.

Estate Action, Hackney

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what bids he has received from the London borough of Hackney for the estate action programme 1992-93; what estates were covered by the bid and at what cost to each; and what order of priority was identified by Hackney council in the bid.

Mr. Yeo: Hackney has set its estate action bids for 1992-93 in the context of the strategy of its comprehensive estates initiative, which covers five of its worst large panel system-built estates.

The 1992-93 bids are for three of those estates, as follows:

	£
Clapton Park	2,750,000
Trowbridge	4,427,000
New Kingshold	600,000

The bids are not individually prioritised. They will be considered in competition with other bids made to my Department by other authorities and, if they progress, they will do so subject to progress being achieved on a number of factors which are set out in the estate action guidelines. Regard will also be had to the progress of the wider comprehensive estates initiative, which is the subject of continuing discussions between my Department and the council.

Underwater Archaeological Sites

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department is making with the management of underwater archaeological sites since taking over responsibility for administering the relevant sections of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894.

Mr. Yeo: The Merchant Shipping Act 1894 remains the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but in April this year my Department took over responsibility for the operation of the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 in English waters.

Since then we have taken a number of steps to ensure that important underwater archaeological sites are adequately protected.

In May we moved quickly to protect a site in the Erme estuary, south Devon and have licensed archaeological work on that and a further eight protected sites this season.

Since the majority of protected sites were discovered by amateur divers, it is important that they should understand the basics of archaeology and to that end we have granted the Nautical Archaeology Society almost £30,000 in 1991-92, with similar levels likely in the following two years, to expand its training and education programme.

Protection can be effective only for known sites. We have therefore expanded the programme of our contractors, the archeological diving unit of St. Andrews university, to examine further sites which might merit protection and increased the resources of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England for the preparation of a central record of historic wrecks, as proposed in the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance".

My Department has also been working in conjunction with the joint nautical archaeology policy committee on an explanatory note for divers to remove misconceptions about the operations of the legislation affecting wrecks and a draft code of practice for seabed developers whose operations might affect archaeological sites.

Elm Energy and Recycling Project

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the eligibility of the Elm energy and recycling project, Wolverhampton for a city grant; when he expects a final decision on the project's eligibility to be made; what procedures have been used in assessing the project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: No formal application for city grant has been made to the Department. Representatives of the firm will be meeting my officials to discuss their proposals next week. Following that meeting the Department will be able to advise Elm Energy on whether an application for city grant is likely to be successful.

Drought Orders

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many drought orders his Department has granted in each year since records began.

Mr. [illegible]dry: Since 1976, when the Drought Act 1976 brought in the present drought order powers, the Secretary of State for the Environment has made the following numbers of drought orders:

	Number
1976	116
1977	nil
1978	17
1979	nil
1980	2
1981	nil
1982	13
1983	5
1984	82
1985	nil
1986	nil
1987	nil
1988	1
1989	74
1990	65
[1]1991	28

[1]To date.

This table corrects a misprint in my answer to the hon. Member of 7 November 1991, *Official Report*, Vol. 198, column *1*. The number of drought orders made by the Secretary of State in 1984 was 82, not 92 as shown in that answer.

Declaration of Financial Interests

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make new regulations about declaration of financial interests by councillors and senior officials of local authorities; and when such regulations will come into operation.

Mr. Key: Regulations will be made and will come into operation as soon as possible; they will not concern officials' financial interests.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the 1989-90 rates bill and his estimate of the 1991-92 council tax bill for a couple and two 1991-92 community charges for a two bedroom flat in a council tower block and a two-bedroom turn-of-century terraced house in *(a)* Barnet, *(b)* Brent, *(c)* Croydon, *(d)* Hackney, *(e)* Harrow, *(f)* Havering, *(g)* Kensington and Chelsea, *(h)* Lewisham, *(i)* Southwark and *(j)* Waltham Forest.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 November 1991]*: The information requested is not available.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of gross national product is accounted for by public spending on housing.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 28 November 1991]*: The latest available outturn figure for gross expenditure on housing in Great Britain, including spending from receipts and on housing benefits, relates to 1989-90 when it accounted for 2·2 per cent. of gross domestic product.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Intergovernmental Meetings

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out to date the conclusions and agreements he has reached in the Trevi series of intergovernmental meetings.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Ministers of Interior/Justice of the member states of the European Community are scheduled to meet on 2 and 3 December. At the present time, therefore, no conclusions have been reached or agreements made following the intergovernmental meetings which have taken place during the Dutch presidency.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he was informed of the recent Staffordshire police operation in Brixton gaol;

(2) if the involvement of Staffordshire police inside Brixton prison was made known to Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons when preparing his report.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The allegations on which the questions appear to be based fall to be considered by Mr. Colin Bailey, whose appointment was announced by the chief constable of Staffordshire on 20 November. As I made clear in my reply to the hon. Member on 21 November at column *265*, information relating to the prisoners' intention to escape was not reported to Ministers until after the escape. It was made available to prison service headquarters and to the governor of HM prison Brixton in February 1991 and to HM chief inspector of prisons in the context of his inquiry into the escape.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the alleged break-in to Brixton prison three days prior to the escape of two suspected IRA terrorists.

Mrs. Rumbold: The allegations have been looked into. There is no evidence to substantiate them.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities exist in Brixton prison to screen incoming packages.

Mrs. Rumbold: Primarily x-ray facilities and metal detectors.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *330*, if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the reason for the presence of 24 police officers in the vicinity of Wandsworth prison on 7 July 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 7 July 1991 the governor at Wandsworth received information that an escape attempt might be made from the prison. In accordance with standard procedures, the governor informed the Metropolitan police. A decision was made by the police to attend.

Young Offenders

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders were transferred from Hewell Grange to the young offender institution at Finnamore Wood camp during September 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty-one.

Winchester Magistrates Court

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, when considering whether to approve the closure of the magistrates court in Winchester, he will take into account the extra transport costs which such closure would impose on the inhabitants of Winchester;

(2) what information he has on the specific information, including details of the accountancy formula used, on which Hampshire magistrates court committee has based its proposed decision to close Winchester magistrates court.

Mr. John Patten: These questions do not arise because I understand that the Hampshire magistrates courts committee has as yet taken no decision about the Winchester courthouse. The Home Secretary's approval for the closure of any magistrates courthouse is required only if there is an appeal to him by the paying local authority concerned under section 56 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 against a courts committee's decision to close it. If there were to be an appeal in the case of Winchester full account would be taken of all the relevant arguments including the circumstances of court users.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 22 October to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State regarding an application by a citizen of Sudan.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 27 November.

Criminal Intelligence Service

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes are proposed to the executive powers of the executive co-ordinator of the

regional crime squads; and whether the executive co-ordinator is to be given overall control of the regional criminal intelligence offices and the technical support units.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When the new national criminal intelligence service is established in 1992, the executive co-ordinator of the regional crime squads will become one of its two deputy directors. There will be no change to the existing situation in which the executive co-ordinator has no executive authority in relation to either the regional criminal intelligence offices or the technical support units.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will *(a)* list the titles of the branches and squads for the Metropolitan police specialist operations department, and *(b)* state how the creation of the national criminal intelligence service will affect these units.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

SO1 International and Organised Crime Branch
- 1 Squad. Major investigation pool
- 2 Squad. National office for the suppression of counterfeit currency
- 3 Squad. Extradition, passport and illegal immigration-deportation
- 5 Squad. Central cheque squad
- 6 Squad. Stolen motor vehicle investigation squad

SO2 Crime support branch
SO3 Scenes of crime branch
SO4 National identification bureau
SO5 Miscellaneous force indexes
SO6 Metropolitan and City police company fraud squad
SO7 Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory
SO8 Serious crime branch (flying squad)
SO9 Regional crime squad
SO10 [1]Crime operations group
SO11 [1]Metropolitan police criminal intelligence branch
SO12 Special branch
SO13 Anti-terrorist branch
SO14 Royalty protection branch
SO15 Royal palaces division
SO16 Diplomatic protection group
SO17 PNC bureau
SO18 Palace of Westminster

[1] It is presently intended that parts of these units will become part of the national criminal intelligence service.

[2] The commercial criminal intelligence bureau (presently part of SO6) will become part of the national criminal intelligence service.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the transitional and full "cut over" date for users of the integrated national criminal intelligence system;

(2) which existing databases will form the basis for the integrated national criminal intelligence system;

(3) if he will list the location of all the regional criminal intelligence offices; and indicate which offices *(a)* are fully computerised, *(b)* have an interfacing capacity with national intelligence units and *(c)* have been earmarked for closure in the proposed reorganisation of the national intelligence gathering system;

(4) if he will detail which, if any, national intelligence units are using new computing facilities provided as part of the integrated national criminal intelligence system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently nine regional criminal intelligence offices, none of which is fully computerised and all of which interface with the police national computer. Their locations are:

Regional criminal intelligence offices	*Location*
1	Manchester
2[1]	Durham
3	Wakefield
4	Birmingham
5, 6 and 9	London
7	Bristol
8[1]	Cardiff

[1] Earmarked for closure on 31 March 1992.

A computer system is being developed to support the new national criminal intelligence service and it is intended that the system will be introduced in 1994. It will incorporate selected data from the national drugs intelligence unit database and will replace the crime pattern analysis facility presently provided by the police national computer.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to create a DNA database as part of the national criminal intelligence system or on the new PNC 2 computer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no such plans. The question of establishing a DNA database has been put to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Metropolitan Police Computer

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details not involving national security of the Metropolitan police C department computer, including *(a)* a description of the indexes held and number of entries, *(b)* the number of terminals attached to the system, and *(c)* the number of officers qualified to use the system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that C Department of the Metropolitan police ceased to exist with the reorganisation of the service in 1987.

Following reorganisation, a number of C department branches amalgamated with other branches to form specialist operations department.

There are 123 separate computer systems in specialist operations department. Information regarding the indexes held, the number of entries, the number of terminals attached to the systems and the number of officers authorised to use them is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give brief details of the computer systems in use and those planned for the Metropolitan police force;

(2) if he will give details of the new computer facilities that are planned for all users of the Metropolitan police specialist operations department computer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that the Metropolitan police service uses computer systems for criminal intelligence, financial management, equipment management, word processing, desk top publishing, computer-aided dispatch messages, and management and personnel information. In addition, the service uses the PNC and HOLMES systems.

There are plans to bring into operation within the next few years a crime report and information system (CRIS), a computer-based accounting system (FINESSE) and a system for the police estate (PREMSYS).

Police National Computer

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail which indexes have migrated from the police national computer on to the new facilities of PNC 2, and if he will list, and give the projected size of, the indexes planned for PNC 2.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The following information is now on PNC2:

Criminal names
Fingerprints
Wanted and missing persons
Disqualified drivers
Convictions
Cross references
Vehicle owners
Vehicle reports
Stolen property
Police directories

Further applications are being planned for PNC2 including a national criminal records system and a national criminal intelligence system. The sizes of the databases for these applications have not yet been decided.

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received a complaints form from Mr. Terry Foster of Winson Green prison; and on what date an official acknowledgement was sent in reply.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. Foster submitted a request/complaint to the governor of Birmingham prison on 30 October. On the following day a member of staff explained matters to Mr. Foster orally and on 4 November he was sent an acknowledgement. A written reply was given on 20 November.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the ages of people applying for citizenship, in each of the last five years, who were born in the United Kingdom but not registered at the time;

(2) how many applications he has received in each of the last five years for citizenship from people born in the United Kingdom whose birth was not registered at the time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not available. Registration of a person's birth is not directly relevant to their entitlement to British citizenship.

Regional Crime Squads

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the establishment and present strength of each regional crime squad in England and Wales; and whether any decision has been made on the proposals of the executive co-ordinator of regional crime squads for their restructuring made in his report of January 1990;

(2) if the Metropolitan police's squads for serious crime are to be integrated into the south-east England regional crime squad.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Establishment	*Present strength*
No. 1 RCS	239	233
No. 2 RCS	102	102
No. 3 RCS	172	167
No. 4 RCS	181	176
No. 5 RCS	148	148
No. 6 RCS	128	127
No. 7 RCS	117	115
No. 8 RCS	59	59
No. 9 RCS	238	238

The proposals of the executive co-ordinator to restructure the regional crime squads are being considered in consultation with the police authorities. No decision has yet been reached on the geographical boundaries of the proposed new squads or on what functions might be integrated in a south-east England regional crime squad.

Machine-readable Passport

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce a new machine-readable jumbo passport.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am pleased to announce that the computerisation of the Passport Agency's regional offices is now complete. We are therefore introducing a new machine-readable jumbo passport, for use by frequent travellers. The Privy Council has approved an Order in Council, the Consular Fees (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 1991, which gives authority for the issue of a machine-readable 48-page jumbo passport at a fee of £22·50, compared with a fee of £15 for a standard 32-page passport. The order will come into effect on 2 December, and the Passport Agency will begin to issue the new passport once stocks of the old blue jumbo passports are exhausted.

Staffordshire Police

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Staffordshire on how many police officers in his force have been removed from normal duties in the past two years and the reasons for such removals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We understand from the chief constable that two police officers were required to resign in 1989 for criminal conduct and neglect of duty and one in 1990 for neglect of duty. We understand that a further nine officers in 1989 and eight in 1990 were charged with offences against the discipline code. The chief constable does not publicly discuss the offences with which the individual officers were charged.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has put in place to keep under review the breeds of dog on which he might wish to exercise his powers under section 2 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: Home Office officials closely monitor the nature and circumstances of dog attacks brought to their attention by a variety of means. My right hon. Friend and I receive regular reports from them both about specific incidents and more generally about the operation of the existing measures to deal with dangerous dogs.

Directorate of Telecommunications

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will privatise the office of the directorate of telecomunications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government's objective is to achieve better quality and value for money in the delivery of Government services by introducing competition. In line with this objective, the directorate now charges police forces and others for its services in direct competition with the private sector. DTELS, as it is now called, is also implementing a programme of extensive management change aimed at producing a viable commercial operation. Its position in the public sector will then be reviewed.

Small Shops

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that in any reform of the Shops Act 1950, the position of small shops is protected.

Mrs. Rumbold: As I indicated in my reply on 26 November to an earlier question from my hon. Friend at columns *446-47*, proposals that small shops should be allowed legally to trade longer into the evenings, and in the full range of their goods on Sundays, are being taken fully into account in our consideration of the reform of the Shops Act.

Recording of Information

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instigate a system of reporting and recording information from the health services, coroners' courts, and the police on the scale of fatalities among the homeless and itinerants.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Sunday Trading

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with Outlets Providing for Everyday Needs about the small shops' campaign for Sunday trading.

Mrs. Rumbold: I met representatives of OPEN on 30 May, in my programme of discussions with a wide range of interest groups on possible ways of reforming the law on Sunday trading in England and Wales; and on 7 August, when at their invitation I visited a typical small convenience store. OPEN have since corresponded with me about their proposals for reform.

Motorcycle Equipment

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate proposed competition with private sector manufacturers on the production of sonic motorcycle repeater equipment by the directorate of telecommunications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The provision of equipment for police forces is the responsibility of police authorities. Versions of the motorcycle repeater unit, which is available from DTELS, have been in use by forces for some years. It is for police authorities, advised by chief constables, to decide whether to purchase these or any other units.

Charities Bill

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the Charities Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. John Patten: Since publication of the Bill we have received one letter from an hon. Member forwarding correspondence from his constituent; about 10 from Peers; and a dozen letters from charities and professional bodies. The majority of correspondents have expressed general support for the aims of the Bill.

Life Sentences

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number of life-sentenced prisoners, excluding terrorist cases, held in British prisons for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on offences committed by terrorists is recorded centrally only for prisoners sentenced to life for homicide. The readily available information is given in the table.

Population of life sentence prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June: by year, 1979-90

Year	Number[1]
1979	1,431
1980	1,569
1981	1,660
1982	1,773
1983	1,807
1984	1,902
1985	2,032
1986	2,174
1987	2,320
1988	2,484
1989	2,656
[2]1990	2,778

[1] Excluding terrorists sentenced for murder or manslaughter.
[2] Provisional figures.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of mandatory and discretionary life-sentenced prisoners, excluding terrorist cases, that have been released from British prisons for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on offences committed by terrorists is recorded centrally only for prisoners sentenced to life for homicide. The readily available information is given in the table.

Persons[1] released from prison service establishments in England and Wales on life licence, 1979-90

Year of release	Murder[2]	Manslaughter[2]	Other offence[3]
1979	62	6	3
1980	33	10	6
1981	57	10	10
1982	79	5	17
1983	83	5	14
1984	52	7	7
1985	51	3	6
1986	37	3	4
1987	46	2	3
1988	54	8	3
1989	62	4	1
[4]1990	48	9	7

[1] Excluding persons released following a recall.
[2] Excluding terrorists.
[3] Including terrorists.
[4] Provisional figures.

PRIME MINISTER

Classless Society

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those measures brought in since December 1990 which are aimed at bringing about a classless society.

The Prime Minister: Government policies are designed to improve society by the removal of barriers to choice and by the provision of opportunity.

A key element in our approach is the citizens charter, which is intended to ensure that everyone, whoever and wherever they are, will have access to the same high-quality public services. This approach is reflected in our legislative programme and other measures that we are taking.

Our education policies will raise standards and improve parental choice. We have introduced legislation to provide parents with more information about the performance of schools; to improve school inspection; to widen access to an expanded higher education system; to abolish the distinction between universities and polytechnics; and to raise the status of vocational education and of further education colleges.

Our health policies are designed to achieve a more efficient health service with higher quality of health care for all, underpinned by a new approach of setting targets for the improvement of health in key areas, as proposed in the recent consultative document "The Health of the Nation" and its Scottish and Welsh equivalents. Legislation has been introduced this Session aimed at improving the standards of local government services with increased powers for local authority auditors and provision to extend competition to a wider range of services.

In the housing field we have introduced pilot rent-to-mortgage schemes to extend tenants' present opportunities to buy their own homes. We are preparing a revised tenants charter for local authority tenants and a new right to repair. We have brought in new arrangements to ensure that tenants are actively consulted in local authorities' housing plans.

We are providing more effective training opportunities and better help for the unemployed in obtaining new jobs. Our policies continue to provide strong support for people in the inner cities, and the new initiative of city challenge announced earlier this year gives the whole community an opportunity to bring imaginative and innovative approaches to regenerating their cities.

We attach particular significance to support for families through the provision of increased child benefit, and the establishment of the Child Support Agency, for which legislation was introduced and enacted earlier this year, to improve the enforcement and collection of child maintenance. We are continuing to improve the opportunities for disabled people to play an independent part in society. This year we enacted legislation to introduce two new social security benefits for disabled people.

We have taken steps, through support of Opportunity 2000 and in other ways, to increase opportunities for women and people from the ethnic minorities to play their full part in public and national life.

These policies, and many others, will contribute to the development of a society with fewer divisions, in which talent and initiatives are rewarded.

Members' Letters

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Prime Minister what is his normal practice for dealing with mail addressed to him by right hon. and hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I receive an enormous number of letters every week—currently some 5,000—from Members of Parliament and others. It is not possible for me to deal with all these letters personally and I must accordingly refer most of them to the Minister and the Department with the responsibility for the policy in question.

HEALTH

Community Health Councils

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will amend his Department's guidance to health authorities on appointment to community health councils to remove the advice that appointing bodies should not appoint people over the age of 70 years without special reasons.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to amend the Department's advice on the eligibility and criteria for appointment to community health councils.

Salmonella

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the dangers to public health in the United Kingdom from the sale of creamed coconut contaminated with salmonella.

Mr. Dorrell: Properly produced creamed coconut poses no danger to public health in the United Kingdom. However, there have been a small number of instances recently where either the raw dessicated coconut or the processed product itself has been shown on routine testing to be contaminated with salmonella organisms. The Department has been actively involved in ensuring affected products have been withdrawn from the food chain. No cases of human illness associated with consumption of creamed coconut have been identified.

Manufacturers of this product should purchase raw materials only from reliable sources and take the necessary precautions in accordance with good manufacturing practice.

Dental Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing both the number and the percentage of the potential population of children registered as national health service patients with dentists in each family health service authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is shown in the table. Since the new dental contract was introduced in October last year, almost 6 million children in England have been registered with a dentist.

FHSA	Number of Capitation Registrations 30 September 1991	Child Registrations as a percentage of child population[1]
Northern		
Cleveland	79,471	59
Cumbria	61,502	58
Durham	66,256	50
Northumberland	36,547	54
Gateshead	22,336	50
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	29,236	47
North Tyneside	23,370	56
South Tyneside	16,542	48
Sunderland	29,985	42
Yorkshire		
Humberside	108,371	54
North Yorkshire	93,123	60
Bradford	55,703	46
Calderdale	25,483	56
Kirklees	46,794	52
Leeds	92,137	57
Wakefield	37,545	52
Trent		
Derbyshire	110,043	53
Leicestershire	115,439	55
Lincolnshire	71,022	56
Nottinghamshire	130,616	57
Barnsley	24,694	49
Doncaster	42,071	60
Rotherham	30,952	52
Sheffield	62,497	57
East Anglia		
Cambridgeshire	85,971	55
Norfolk	112,448	71
Suffolk	86,954	58
North West Thames		
Bedfordshire	46,599	36
Hertfordshire	144,657	64
Barnet	31,394	45
Brent and Harrow	46,043	44
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	52,113	36
Hillingdon	23,149	43
Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster	15,697	27
North East Thames		
Essex	182,199	53
Barking and Havering	37,229	44
Camden and Islington	22,807	31
City and East London	41,170	28
Enfield and Haringey	47,243	46
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	49,613	50
South East Thames		
East Sussex	83,304	59
Kent	179,773	52
Greenwich and Bexley	48,577	48
Bromley	32,878	53
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	57,035	36
South West Thames		
Surrey	130,779	59
West Sussex	98,767	68
Croydon	34,780	48
Kingston and Richmond	33,586	56
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	51,900	42
Wessex		
Dorset	86,755	66
Hampshire	200,743	56
Wiltshire	71,492	54
Isle of Wight	15,162	58
Oxford		
Berkshire	94,082	52
Buckinghamshire	90,293	58
Northamptonshire	71,343	52
Oxfordshire	74,100	54
South Western		
Avon	128,834	61
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	60,349	61
Devon	138,019	63
Gloucestershire	71,922	61
Somerset	64,984	64
West Midlands		
Hereford and Worcester	89,603	58
Salop	56,510	60
Staffordshire	129,089	55
Warwickshire	60,355	56
Birmingham	110,653	45
Coventry	31,285	43
Dudley	32,436	49
Sandwell	26,214	38
Solihull	22,535	48
Walsall	27,161	44
Wolverhampton	21,037	35
Mersey		
Cheshire	127,551	57
Liverpool	53,339	48
St. Helens and Knowsley	40,291	48
Sefton	38,959	59
Wirral	40,305	52
North Western		
Lancashire	176,462	55
Bolton	33,957	53
Bury	22,863	56
Manchester	55,022	51
Oldham	29,833	56
Rochdale	26,463	50
Salford	38,720	71
Stockport	43,149	66
Tameside	28,663	57
Trafford	33,484	70
Wigan	42,193	58

Footnote:

[1] Population estimates for 1991 are not yet available. Population estimates as at 30 June 1989 have been used to be consistent with the patient registration data published by the Dental Practice Board.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which United Kingdom companies money under the aid and trade provision has already been allocated in the current financial year.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid agreements involving aid and trade provision funds have been concluded with Governments of developing countries in the current financial year for projects for which the following companies are lead United Kingdom contractors.

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*
China	Cotton mill machinery	Platt Saco Lowell
China	Duck processing unit	APV Baker
China	Shanghai telephone equipment	GPT International
China	Xinjiang ethylene plant	Snamprogetti
China	Yue Yang power station training	GEC Alsthom Turbine Generators
Ghana	Fifth power project	Hawker Siddeley Power Engineering
Ghana	Kotoka airport	Siemens Plessey Radar
Indonesia	Airport security systems	International Aeradio
Indonesia	Flight simulator	Aeronautical Systems Designers
Indonesia	Jambi diesels	Mirrlees Blackstone
Indonesia	Steel bridging phase II	Mabey & Johnson
Indonesia	Toll road design study phase II	Trafalgar House
Indonesia	Western universities equipment	Gallenkamp & Phillip Harris
Malaysia	Pergau hydro electric	Balfaur Beatty Construction
Philippines	Small islands electrification Phases II and III	Dale Electric
Turkey	Equipment for Turkish state Universities	Tecquipment

UN Aid Target

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom accepted the United Nations official aid target; and when the Government expect to meet that target.

Mrs. Chalker: We accepted the 0·7 per cent. target in principle in 1974. Successive Governments have declined to set down a timetable for meeting the target. The levels of aid depend upon our economic circumstances and on other calls on public resources. The aid programme has grown by 10 per cent. in real terms since 1987-88 and is planned to continue to do so. It is of high quality, well targeted and effective.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Environment Minister

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what achievements his Department has recorded in the environmental field since the appointment of a Minister with special responsibility for the environment was nominated for the social security team; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department is committed to making the fullest possible contribution to achieving the aims of the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance".

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was appointed the Department's environmental Minister in September 1990 and has established an environment steering group within the Department to undertake a comprehensive review of the environmental implications of all areas of departmental business and administration. This steering group is now being taken forward by the Benefits Agency.

The Department is participating in the Government's campaign to reduce its energy consumption by 15 per cent. by April 1996. Additional staff have been appointed and trained to offer specialist advice on energy savings and over £0·5 million has been made available for investing in energy efficient measures. This has enabled offices to introduce water saving devices, high-frequency, low-energy fluorescent lighting and more effective lighting controls.

To raise energy awareness issues among departmental staff, the April 1991 edition of the staff magazine featured a centre page spread on the environment. A further article covering environmental issues will appear in the February 1992 edition of the DSS quarterly journal.

Since January 1991 officially acquired vehicles have either been propelled by diesel fuel or petrol engines with catalytic converters fitted. The number of vehicles operating on leaded fuel has been reduced to 4·8 per cent. of the fleet and replacement policy aims to reduce this figure to zero by mid-1992.

In March an "unleaded petrol" only card was introduced for the purchases of fuel for appropriate cars.

Families (Income Levels)

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update to 1988 his reply to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, *Official Report*, 1 February 1990, column *348-50*, showing the numbers of working and out-of-work families with children at different levels of income, according to the family size, distinguishing between one-parent and two-parent families and between one-earner and two-earner families; and showing the benefits on which the out-of-work families depended.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is set out in the following tables.

These tables should be used only as free-standing income analyses and not for any time series or trend analyses.

Some of the sample sizes in the tables are too small to be statistically reliable and robust conclusions cannot be drawn.

Table 1

Number of working families with children at various income levels: Great Britain 1988

thousands

Gross weekly income excluding state benefits £	*Total*	*One parent family*	*Two parent family*	*One wage family*	*Two wage family*	*Number of dependent children* 1	2	3	[3]4
Under 80	120	30	90	90	30	60	40	10	10
80-89	40	10	30	20	10	20	10	[2]	10
90-99	30	[2]	20	30	[1]	10	20	[2]	[1]
100-109	50	10	40	40	10	30	10	[2]	10
110-119	70	10	60	30	40	30	30	[2]	[2]
120-129	60	10	50	50	10	40	20	10	[2]
130-139	90	10	70	70	20	50	30	10	[2]
140-149	90	20	70	60	20	40	30	10	[2]
150-159	100	10	90	80	30	50	30	20	10
160-169	130	10	120	80	50	70	60	10	[1]
170-179	140	10	130	70	70	60	60	20	10
180-189	130	10	120	70	60	40	50	30	10
190-199	160	10	150	90	70	70	60	20	10
199-219	330	10	320	200	130	130	130	40	30
220-239	400	10	380	160	230	190	170	30	10
240-259	340	10	330	160	180	120	160	50	10
260-279	260	10	250	120	140	90	110	50	10
280-299	320	20	300	100	220	120	150	40	10
300 and over	2,430	40	2,390	640	1,800	970	1,090	320	50
Total	5,280	250	5,020	2,150	3,120	2,180	2,240	670	190

[1] Denotes nil cases in sample.
[2] Denotes less than 5,000 cases.
[3] Or more.

Notes:

1. The figures are derived from the 1988 Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to sampling error. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10,000 and so rows and columns may not sum exactly to the totals shown.
2. Gross weekly income is the income reported in 1988 without any updating.
3. A "working family" is defined as one where at least one parent is in full-time (30 hours or more) employment or self-employment.
4. The figures exclude any families not living in private households.

Table Two

Number of non-working families of working age with children at various income levels: Great Britain 1988

Thousands

Gross weekly income including state benefits		*Under 50*	*50-59*	*60-69*	*70-79*	*80-89*	*90-99*	*100-109*	*110-119*	*120-129*	*130-139*	*140-149*	*150 and over*	*Total*
Total		80	60	70	140	180	190	200	110	70	80	50	180	1,410
One parent family		60	50	60	120	150	120	90	40	40	40	10	50	830
Two parent family		30	10	10	20	30	70	110	70	30	40	30	130	580
Number of dependent children:														
One		60	40	60	100	100	60	60	30	20	20	10	60	640
Two		20	20	10	30	80	100	100	40	20	40	10	80	540
Three		—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	10	10	30	30	30	20	10	10	20	160
Four or more		—[2]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	10	10	10	10	20	70
National Insurance benefits being received:														
None	(a)	50	20	10	10	20	20	20	20	10	20	10	80	270
	(b)	20	40	50	120	140	150	140	80	30	30	20	50	880
UB	(a)	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[2]	—[1]	10	20	—[2]	—	—[2]	10	10	50
	(b)	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[1]	10	—[1]	10	10	10	—[2]	—[1]	—[2]	40
SB/SSP	(a)	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—	—[2]	—[1]	—[1]	10	10
	(b)	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]
IVB	(a)	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[2]	10	10	—[2]	10	10	10	10	60
	(b)	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	10	—[1]	—[2]	10
Other	(a)	10	—[1]	—[2]	10	10	—[2]	—[2]	10	10	10	—[2]	10	60
	(b)	—[1]	—[1]	—[2]	—[1]	10	—[1]	10	—[2]	—[2]	—[2]	—[1]	10	30

(a) Without supplementary benefit.
(b) With supplementary benefit.
[1] Denotes nil cases in sample.
[2] Denotes less than 5,000 cases.

Notes:

1. The figures are derived from the 1988 Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to sampling error. All figures have been rounded to the

nearest 10,000 and so rows and columns may not sum exactly to the totals shown.
2. Gross weekly income is the income reported in 1988 without any updating.
3. A "non-working family" is defined as one where neither is in full-time (30 hours of more) employment or self-employment.
4. The figures exclude any families not living in private households.
5. "Other" National Insurance Benefits include industrial disablement and widow's benefit.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each local authority the number of residents *(a)* in part III homes and *(b)* transferred from local authority homes to trust status homes and therefore in receipt of income support.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the number of residents in part III homes (for England only) by local authority is contained in "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: Local Authority Supported Residents Year Ending 31 March 1990 England" (RA/90/1), a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on the number of residents affected by the transfer of local authority part III homes to the private or voluntary sector is not collected centrally. Entitlement to income support for residents of such homes is a matter for the local adjudication officer, but since 12 August 1991 has been restricted to the part III rate for those people resident at the time of transfer.

State Pensions

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from *(a)* the Scottish Old-Age Pensioners Association or *(b)* community organisations about the level of state pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: A letter has been received from the Scottish Old-Age Pensioners Association which covered all aspects of provision for elderly people. We have also received a number of representations from community organisations.

Social Fund

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many social fund inspectors were employed on 1 July;

(2) how many applications for review by a social fund inspector were outstanding for more than one month on 31 July.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the Social Fund Commissioner that on 31 July 1991 there were 54 social fund inspectors employed and 1,941 review applications outstanding for more than one month.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from *(a)* the Scottish Old-Age Pensioners Association or *(b)* community organisations about cold weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On 29 October I wrote to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) about representations from the Airdrie branch of the Scottish Old-Age Pensioners Association. Other organisations have also made representations on this subject.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education Costs

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the total administration costs attributable to local education authority further education and adult education management for each local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989-90, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available, the net recurrent expenditure on overall administration of education by each local education authority in England was as shown in the following table. Information on authorities' administration spending on further education and adult education is not collected centrally. Matters of education in Wales are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Net recurrent expenditure on education administration[1] 1989-90

	£'000
ILEA	78,934
Barking	3,642
Barnet	5,103
Bexley	4,716
Brent	6,735
Bromley	4,634
Croydon	5,960
Ealing	8,296
Enfield	5,897
Haringey	n/a
Harrow	4,652
Havering	4,608
Hillingdon	5,050
Hounslow	n/a
Kingston-upon-Thames	3,503
Merton	3,938
Newham	6,285
Redbridge	4,606
Richmond upon Thames	3,571
Sutton	5,547
Waltham Forest	4,567
Birmingham	18,903
Coventry	8,333
Dudley	4,909
Sandwell	4,974
Solihull	2,628
Walsall	3,711
Wolverhampton	5,505
Knowsley	3,359
Liverpool	8,137
St. Helens	1,890
Sefton	5,644
Wirral	6,277
Bolton	4,968
Bury	3,192
Manchester	n/a
Oldham	4,371
Rochdale	3,529
Salford	6,105
Stockport	1,980
Tameside	2,878
Trafford	2,830
Wigan	4,330
Barnsley	2,961
Doncaster	3,996
Rotherham	3,470
Sheffield	9,727
Bradford	7,926

	£'000
Calderdale	3,857
Kirklees	8,588
Leeds	10,068
Wakefield	n/a
Gateshead	3,800
Newcastle Upon Tyne	5,996
North Tyneside	n/a
South Tyneside	3,460
Sunderland	3,594
Isles of Scilly	57
Avon	15,675
Bedfordshire	8,297
Berkshire	12,901
Buckinghamshire	11,506
Cambridgeshire	11,919
Cheshire	14,595
Cleveland	10,430
Cornwall	7,326
Cumbria	10,551
Derbyshire	14,659
Devon	11,052
Dorset	7,945
Durham	6,074
East Sussex	6,931
Essex	25,756
Gloucestershire	8,032
Hampshire	16,545
Hereford and Worcester	7,729
Hertfordshire	9,743
Humberside	12,799
Isle of Wight	2,465
Kent	18,742
Lancashire	21,051
Leicestershire	11,261
Lincolnshire	8,185
Norfolk	9,234
North Yorkshire	8,901
Northamptonshire	8,868
Northumberland	4,250
Nottinghamshire	16,261
Oxfordshire	7,451
Shropshire	4,858
Somerset	8,095
Staffordshire	12,252
Suffolk	9,981
Surrey	18,626
Warwickshire	7,796
West Sussex	11,547
Wiltshire	8,039

Notes to table:

(1) Net recurrent expenditure on education administration, both by education departments and recharged from central departments, shown by local authorities in their spending returns to the Department of the Environment. Net recurrent expenditure includes all expenditure other than capital financing costs, less income other than from specific Government grants.

(2) n/a indicates that a spending return is not available.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the standard spending assessment in each of the metropolitan district councils is attributable to adult education; and how much is spent in cash terms.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to identify what proportion of standard spending assessments is attributable to further education for adults. Nor do LEAs' routine expenditure returns separately identify their spending on this.

School Buildings and Repairs

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority in England *(a)* its authorised capital guideline and *(b)* its actual capital expenditure, in respect of school buildings and repairs, with totals for England, for 1987-88 to 1990-91, and with an estimate for 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The information readily available is shown in the table:

Capital allocations and spending by authority on schools (£'000 cash)

	1987-88		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*1990-91*	*1991-92*
	Notional schools allocation	*Outturn*	*Notional schools allocation*	*Outturn*	*Notional schools allocation*	*Outturn*	*Notional schools ACG*	*Notional schools ACG*
Barking	437	775	605	1,253	245	1,604	459	547
Barnet	640	1,930	832	2,616	972	1,894	788	803
Bexley	1,593	2,656	1,210	3,152	832	3,690	1,197	1,845
Brent	2,421	5,362	2,081	4,848	331	8,705	610	1,110
Bromley	1,564	2,505	370	6,590	653	5,640	1,664	3,656
Croydon	2,337	3,474	1,565	5,048	488	7,818	932	1,859
Ealing	1,205	4,753	839	n/a	300	4,151	654	1,128
Enfield	1,152	1,910	1,287	3,967	1,106	5,028	1,263	1,840
Haringey	1,088	1,754	2,246	n/a	1,696	3,989	755	844
Harrow	301	887	572	2,565	394	3,817	736	940
Havering	393	2,447	692	3,398	1,306	5,105	5,836	1,876
Hillingdon	1,043	5,423	900	7,774	638	12,787	1,115	995
Hounslow	1,157	3,719	1,152	5,461	482	7,948	491	1,476
Kingston	221	898	243	1,672	171	2,541	165	180
Merton	1,019	2,502	985	2,408	4,527	6,949	3,370	1,243
Newham	1,101	3,977	3,061	5,917	3,393	8,416	5,520	8,477
Redbridge	1,730	2,553	3,698	n/a	2,002	5,689	1,548	737
Richmond	66	363	253	n/a	480	1,671	738	438
Sutton	227	1,296	606	3,080	649	5,001	2,885	3,335
Waltham Forest	2,445	3,191	5,462	n/a	7,965	11,837	6,450	3,328
City	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	2
Camden	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,044	832
Westminster	—	—	—	—	—	—	379	573
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,608	650
Hackney	—	—	—	—	—	—	982	1,930
Hammersmith	—	—	—	—	—	—	674	1,140
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—	306	885
Kensington	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,145	1,834
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—	536	1,068

	1987-88		1988-89		1989-90		1990-91	1991-92
	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools ACG	Notional schools ACG
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,175	2,201
Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,367	1,220
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	—	—	742	1,197
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,778	12,329
ILEA	12,316	23,003	14,882	21,298	11,255	40,325	n/a	n/a
Birmingham	3,494	5,339	4,175	4,164	5,096	9,200	10,287	10,734
Coventry	4,135	6,184	5,015	8,174	2,562	16,349	1,693	1,647
Dudley	1,250	2,968	1,492	3,556	2,206	3,826	2,031	5,745
Sandwell	482	1,147	638	634	1,837	3,179	1,604	1,243
Solihull	475	1,940	677	2,111	692	2,612	809	1,318
Walsall	824	3,105	907	2,781	856	475	392	767
Wolverhampton	1,173	1,239	1,202	1,865	492	2,092	719	1,982
Knowsley	825	1,906	608	1,174	1,799	1,678	1,580	1,141
Liverpool	1,141	1,610	1,894	9,662	541	2,953	8,262	5,425
St. Helens	810	351	1,156	1,476	778	1,363	1,613	2,145
Sefton	1,790	1,837	1,450	1,704	1,713	2,734	2,976	3,661
Wirral	1,240	3,151	2,287	4,681	2,327	3,456	3,245	3,310
Bolton	487	734	981	2,227	1,237	2,735	760	785
Bury	320	762	467	953	605	1,560	672	1,073
Manchester	7,538	5,648	7,506	n/a	4,773	10,492	2,524	4,002
Oldham	2,750	1,578	2,793	2,196	2,139	3,639	3,148	8,477
Rochdale	2,195	2,351	1,399	3,463	2,111	3,505	3,272	5,976
Salford	1,768	3,009	3,235	3,329	3,737	3,939	3,870	3,368
Stockport	1,135	2,303	2,844	2,791	1,496	4,556	1,212	1,799
Tameside	364	1,458	681	2,405	727	2,305	1,380	1,734
Trafford	992	1,191	434	1,370	2,645	6374	9,269	2,869
Wigan	2,636	3,335	3,358	3,734	1,337	2,178	3,942	6,740
Barnsley	447	709	314	1,715	251	2,462	1,751	729
Doncaster	324	449	301	792	684	1,222	780	375
Rotherham	237	1,820	655	2,248	624	2,197	1,314	924
Sheffield	2,080	5,455	2,991	9,022	1,850	7,998	1,734	1,114
Bradford	6,121	9,445	10,289	10,599	7,897	11,677	8,549	6,284
Calderdale	1,863	1,464	3,494	3,255	2,398	4,596	1,171	1,643
Kirklees	650	2,326	931	2,865	733	2,422	1,001	2,840
Leeds	2,220	10,789	4,411	15,125	3,236	10,128	2,484	16,022
Wakefield	1,977	2,692	3,307	5,614	2,816	5,409	3,124	2,177
Gateshead	1,112	1,304	1,878	3,005	951	4,729	939	2,114
Newcastle	1,737	2,402	2,683	4,408	1,428	4,364	755	2,196
North Tyne	1,907	2,987	2,129	2,765	1,557	1,671	1,238	702
South Tyne	874	1,343	2,247	2,539	3,087	4,022	1,818	1,894
Sunderland	1,733	2,430	3,295	4,947	2,096	5,293	1,453	2,017
Isles of Scilly	30	23	39	56	149	143	221	16
Avon	3,474	6,337	3,630	6,507	3,739	7,265	3,647	4,559
Bedfordshire	1,105	5,142	1,492	4,432	1,931	5,876	2,309	1,833
Berkshire	3,299	11,070	5,111	16,901	5,574	15,502	4,283	3,001
Bucks	5,846	5,254	5,946	6,315	7,735	9,129	4,459	5,805
Cambridgeshire	3,255	9,665	4,250	15,373	5,540	20,925	8,405	5,531
Cheshire	4,693	8,723	4,544	21,876	3,283	11,215	5,594	4,951
Cleveland	3,883	4,326	3,398	5,061	5,125	4,654	3,178	2,851
Cornwall	5,115	5,822	6,274	6,531	6,004	8,308	5,557	5,616
Cumbria	2,280	3,201	4,651	5,218	5,198	6,238	5,665	9,179
Derbyshire	8,595	7,930	9,917	11,533	8,383	15,340	11,143	20,735
Devon	4,211	7,696	5,527	11,336	13,645	18,649	11,140	7,135
Dorset	3,423	3,935	2,633	3,458	2,845	3,650	3,707	2,412
Durham	937	1,415	1,317	3,710	2,116	5,212	4,402	6,384
East Sussex	4,089	6,574	7,527	10,225	7,783	12,581	8,403	16,574
Essex	10,904	15,961	15,992	16,939	14,499	15,869	12,703	19,291
Gloucestershire	6,383	5,442	4,295	5,797	5,792	7,815	6,934	6,202
Hampshire	9,222	19,156	13,233	24,584	7,524	22,513	11,647	15,122
Hereford and Worcester	2,474	3,878	2,761	6,158	2,443	7,144	6,091	6,001
Hertfordshire	2,643	9,695	3,548	10,692	4,219	11,603	6,257	6,419
Humberside	10,008	12,495	6,443	11,105	7,160	8,740	7,382	7,795
Isle of Wight	1,354	2,102	1,623	1,755	1,628	1,768	1,515	2,225
Kent	6,464	8,937	6,724	11,432	8,407	17,136	15,410	19,931
Lancashire	4,603	7,435	11,410	10,589	13,363	15,353	17,624	18,751
Leicestershire	4,099	8,635	6,585	10,246	6,655	10,485	9,554	6,813
Lincolnshire	4,457	6,513	3,763	6,739	3,010	6,107	6,598	9,827
Norfolk	4,847	6,633	3,916	6,835	3,529	6,447	2,547	2,301
North Yorks	1,892	3,281	3,164	6,127	2,181	3,977	3,947	4,365
Northants	1,460	5,033	2,823	4,849	3,676	8,673	5,218	7,887
Northumberland	610	950	926	1,736	889	2,511	1,924	3,491
Nottinghamshire	1,817	3,582	2,077	2,848	3,128	6,850	3,276	3,563
Oxfordshire	1,330	2,224	4,128	6,068	3,175	7,186	3,581	6,355
Shropshire	5,119	4,090	4,419	4,203	4,826	5,015	5,029	6,454

	1987-88		1988-89		1989-90		1990-91	1991-92
	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools allocation	Outturn	Notional schools ACG	Notional schools ACG
Somerset	2,488	3,907	2,696	3,951	2,974	6,873	4,691	3,438
Staffordshire	6,841	6,140	6,810	7,749	4,913	10,332	5,918	7,019
Suffolk	5,954	7,930	6,521	10,108	5,841	8,976	7,330	8,149
Surrey	3,570	15,813	4,545	18,442	5,593	20,029	3,459	5,425
Warwickshire	1,005	2,687	1,269	3,259	1,462	4,291	1,260	1,183
West Sussex	1,612	5,225	2,304	7,219	1,858	9,836	3,501	3,333
Wiltshire	3,047	3,840	3,104	3,668	2,656	6,165	5,863	4,590
Total	254,000	432,836	319,000	545,026	311,380	690,376	390,655	462,000

Notes:

1. Expenditure is given in cash terms, rounded to the nearest £1,000; it includes provision from within the Department of the Environment's urban programme, and covers nursery, primary, secondary and special education.
2. Outturn information for 1990-91 and forecast outturn for 1991-92 is not available.
3. Expenditure column totals are not necessarily the same as grossed outturn totals.
4. The allocation figures for all years represent the initial allocations only. However, supplementary allocations were also given as follows:

£000s

1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
9,350	17,700	10,689

The above figures include supplementary allocations to both schools and FE. Most of the allocations would have been in respect of schools work but it is not possible to separately identify the schools figure for each LEA.

1990-91	1991-92
£24,097	£10,000

From 1 April 1990 there was a change in the system of the distribution of capital resources for education buildings. LEAs now receive annual capital guidelines. The above figures represent the schools component only of supplementary credit approvals issued after the ACG announcement in December.

Music Tuition

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities make charges for the provision of tuition in musical instruments to school children.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available. The Department does not keep records of which local education authorities make charges to parents for children's individual tuition on musical instruments.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students with SEN in each local education authority are pursuing local education authority-funded further education training courses in specialist colleges; and what was the total number of students with SEN aged 18 years or older receiving local education authority assistance to follow further education/training courses in specialist colleges.

Mr. Eggar: Information on local education authorities' use of the specialist colleges is not collected centrally.

School Meals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on proposals by the London borough of Camden to end the supply of all school meals.

Mr. Fallon: The London borough of Camden may not end the supply of all school meals. The borough has a statutory duty to continue to provide free school meals to children whose parents are in receipt of income support or who themselves receive income support.

Schools Budget

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will tabulate for each local education authority the amount of money retained by the central administration that could have been delegated in the potential schools budget to meet the 85 per cent. requirement; and whether he will estimate how much this would have been for each primary and secondary school in each local education authority.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is given in the following table.

Amounts which would have been delegated to Schools if 1993-94 85 per cent. requirement had been met in 1991-92

(1) LEA	(2) Totals £ million	(3) Amount per school £
Avon	4·9	11,400
Barnet	1·0	9,000
Bedfordshire	2·6	8,900
Bexley	2·1	24,200
Birmingham	4·3	10,400
Brent	1·0	12,200
Bromley	0·1	800
Cleveland	2·7	10,300
Cornwall	1·1	3,700
Coventry	1·8	14,100
Croydon	3·3	26,600
Derbyshire	2·4	4,700
Doncaster	0·8	5,100
Dudley	0·4	3,700
Durham	4·5	13,000
Ealing	1·5	14,700
Enfield	0·2	2,700
Gateshead	0·6	5,300
Gloucestershire	0·6	2,000
Haringey	0·7	8,000
Harrow	1·2	19,400
Hereford/Worcester	1·6	4,300
Hillingdon	0·7	7,300
Hounslow	1·1	13,500
Humberside	1·0	2,300
Isle of Wight	0·4	5,600
Isles of Scilly	0·02	3,400
Kingston	0·2	4,700

(1) LEA	(2) Totals £ million	(3) Amount per school £
Kirklees	0·04	200
Knowsley	0·8	10,600
Lancashire	7·9	11,100
Leicestershire	1·8	4,200
Liverpool	3·0	10,700
Merton	0·1	900
Newcastle	1·9	17,300
Newham	4·1	48,000
Norfolk	1·1	2,400
North Tyneside	0·2	2,700
North Yorkshire	1·4	3,100
Nottinghamshire	2·8	5,400
Oldham	1·2	10,600
Oxfordshire	0·4	1,500
Redbridge	1·0	13,600
Richmond	0·8	16,200
Sandwell	2·0	14,200
Staffordshire	0·4	800
St. Helens	0·2	2,500
Surrey	0·8	1,800
Tameside	0·7	6,600
Trafford	0·5	5,200
Wakefield	0·6	3,400
Waltham Forest	2·9	37,100
Westminster	0·05	1,000
Wigan	1·7	11,200
Wiltshire	2·3	6,800
Wolverhampton	2·5	20,200
Total and average	85·8	7,400

Notes:
1. The local education authorities (LEAs) listed are the 56 which are currently delegating less than 85 per cent. of their potential schools budget (PSB).
2. A new requirement from April 1993 is that the proportion of the PSB delegated to schools should be a minimum of 85 per cent. Column 2 gives the amount extra which would have been delegated this year if the LEA had reached the 85 per cent. minimum.
3. Column 3 gives the amount in column 2 expressed as an average amount per school for each LEA, rounded to the nearest £100.

DEFENCE

SSN Submarine

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will place an order for the SSN-20 submarine.

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place a contract for the studies into the design of a new SSN to replace the Swiftsure class.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I told the House on 15 October at column 173, we are evaluating designs for a further class of nuclear-powered fleet submarines based on the existing Trafalgar class. A design study contract has been placed with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. today. If the studies are successful, an order for the design and build of the first of class submarine could be placed in the mid-1990s.

Trident

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any further scientific assessments will be carried out in order to ascertain or improve the safety of British Trident warheads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The British Trident nuclear warhead has been subject to stringent safety scrutiny throughout its design process; this scrutiny will continue during production and deployment.

Ex-Service Personnel

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people have left each of the armed services in each year since 1987; how many of them have been entitled to assistance with resettlement; and what information he has on the employment experiences of ex-members of Her Majesty's forces after they leave the service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Lady to table 4.17 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991.

Eligibility for resettlement training is determined primarily by length of service and the circumstances of discharge. About half those who leave the services each year are eligible for the 28 days pre-release vocational training.

A survey of the resettlement of ex-service personnel commissioned by the Ministry of Defence earlier this year revealed that more than a third of respondents were unemployed immediately after leaving the services; of these, more than half gained employment within three months. A fifth have had other periods of unemployment since leaving.

Manpower

4.17 Outflow of United Kingdom Regular Forces: by Service[1]

Number

	Financial years					*1 April—31 December*	
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1989*	*1990*
All Services	36,521	36,961	36,938	39,278	42,567	31,987	30,338
Male	33,881	34,194	34,054	36,556	39,485	29,711	28,035
Officers	3,388	3,528	3,374	3,369	3,646	2,865	2,627
Servicemen	30,493	30,936	30,680	33,187	35,839	26,846	25,408
Female	2,640	2,767	2,884	2,722	3,082	2,276	2,303
Officers	351	334	328	335	331	251	248
Servicewomen	2,289	2,433	2,556	2,387	2,751	2,025	2,055
Royal Navy	6,915	6,919	6,224	5,970	6,792	4,951	5,220
Male	6,356	6,295	5,603	5,382	6,137	4,466	4,710
Officers	648	620	671	653	714	538	537
Servicemen	5,708	5,675	4,932	4,729	5,423	3,928	4,173
Female	559	624	621	588	655	485	510

	Financial years					1 April—31 December	
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1989	1990
Officers	55	46	49	48	43	36	34
Servicewomen	504	578	572	540	612	449	476
Royal Marines	1,088	1,068	1,007	1,095	1,242	905	1,026
Male	1,088	1,068	1,007	1,095	1,242	905	1,026
Officers	68	46	44	50	61	54	50
Servicemen	1,020	1,022	963	1,045	1,181	851	976
Army	21,301	21,761	22,749	24,056	25,061	18,917	17,875
Male	19,999	20,473	21,393	22,834	23,778	17,979	16,927
Officers	1,790	1,654	1,651	1,549	1,809	1,438	1,322
Servicemen	18,209	18,819	19,742	21,285	21,969	16,541	15,605
Female	1,302	1,288	1,356	1,222	1,283	938	948
Officers	195	167	161	138	152	114	123
Servicewomen	1,107	1,121	1,195	1,084	1,131	824	825
Royal Air Force	7,217	7,213	6,958	8,157	9,472	7,214	6,217
Male	6,438	6,358	6,051	7,245	8,328	6,361	5,372
Officers	882	938	1,008	1,117	1,062	835	718
Servicemen	5,556	5,420	5,043	6,128	7,266	5,526	4,654
Female	779	855	907	912	1,144	853	845
Officers	101	121	118	149	136	101	91
Servicewomen	678	734	789	763	1,008	752	754

[1] Comprises all those who left the regular forces and includes deaths.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what undertakings have been given by the Iraqi regime that the money released back to that country in exchange for Ian Richter's release will be used for humanitarian purposes.

Mr. Hurd: The Iraqis were told that, after the release of Mr. Richter, we would exceptionally be prepared to unfreeze £70 million of Iraqi assets for humanitarian purposes as permitted by United Nations Security Council resolutions 661 and 687. We do not plan to release further tranches of assets for this purpose. The Iraqis have been told that we remain firmly committed to the United Nations sanctions regime: the Iraqi Government have not yet met the requirements laid on it by the UN Security Council. Details of the purposes for which the assets are released will be passed to the UN sanctions committee and other interested organisations.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Iraqi regime has yet taken advantage of the UN resolutions allowing it to sell oil provided that the money is used for humanitarian relief.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain hopeful that the regime will see the advantage to be gained by the Iraqi people from implementing Security Council resolutions 706 and 712.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the names of the Libyan citizens accused of the Lockerbie murders, the law under which they are charged, the precise wording of the charge and the legal authority under which their extradition is sought.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 14 November 1991 at column 1227. The text of the warrant which has been placed in the Library of the House contains the precise wording of the charges which have been brought under the law of Scotland against two Libyan nationals, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah. The demand which has been made is for surrender of the accused persons by exercise of executive power.

Treatment of Kurds

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Turkey about the use of napalm, death squads and torture against Kurdish civilians in the south-east of Turkey and inside northern Iraq; and if he will make a further statement on the Government's position on the Kurds.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We fully recognise the right of the Turkish Government to combat the terrorist threat in south-east Turkey. The previous Turkish Government were, however, well aware of our concern about human rights violations. We note with satisfaction the undertaking of the new Turkish Government to combat the terrorist campaign by legal and democratic means and to eliminate torture.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Turkish authorities about the death cells at Eskisehir prison for Kurdish political prisoners and the incompatibility of such use with the United Nations legal charter on stipulated minimum standards of conduct towards prisoners.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular contact with the Turkish authorities on human rights questions and have

noted the decision by the Minister of Justice to move prisoners presently held in Eskisehir prison to other installations.

EC Majority Voting

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those decisions made by majority voting within the European Community since the entry into force of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986; and on each occasion which way the United Kingdom voted.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A detailed list of all decisions made by majority voting since the entry into force of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, including a record of which way the United Kingdom voted in each case, could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Between entry into force of the Single European Act on 1 July 1987 and 30 June 1991, 259 majority votes were held. The United Kingdom voted against on 36 occasions. On decisions taken under the provisions of the Single European Act itself, the United Kingdom has been outvoted only three times in 99 decisions taken during the same period.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Spycatcher" Costs

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General if he will state the total amount (i) in legal costs and (ii) otherwise spent out of public funds on proceedings involving the book "Spycatcher" and including the costs awarded against the Government by the European Court of Human Rights.

The Attorney-General: The total amount paid out in respect of legal fees to date over five years and in several countries is £506,000. It will not be possible to specify for some time the total cost of the litigation, which will include costs of £200,000 awarded against the Government by the European Court of Human Rights this week.

WALES

Departmental Projects

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list those projects, managed by bodies or agencies outside his Department, for which his Department is currently funding an operational deficit; how much of the deficit his Department is carrying; and for what period.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department does not directly fund the operational deficits which arise from projects managed by non-departmental bodies. Such projects are financed by the non-departmental bodies themselves usually, but not always, from their grant-in-aid.

Careers Service

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to privatise the local authority careers service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's proposals for the future management of the careers service are set out in volume 1 of the White Paper, "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm. 1536, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. We propose to legislate to enable a range of options to be introduced, including contracting out the careers service to the private sector.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at the latest available date how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were employed on Action for Community Employment; and how many of them were employed (i) part time or (ii) full time.

Mr. Needham: At 25 October 5,511 men and 4,888 women were employed on Action for Community Employment. Of these 4,685 men and 1,808 women were in full-time employment and 826 men and 3,080 women were employed part time.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums of money have been contributed from the European social fund towards *(a)* Action for Community Employment, *(b)* the youth training programme and *(c)* the job training programme for each year since 1989; and what percentage contribution to the total costs of Action for Community Employment, the youth training programme and the job training programme this represents for each year.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	European Social Fund (ESF) contribution		*Percentage of total expenditure*	
	1989 £ *million*	*1990* £ *million*	*1989* *Per cent.*	*1990* *Per cent.*
Action for Community Employment	7·584	Nil	17·1	Nil
Youth training programme	24·648	17·262	43·1	30·1
Job training programme	0·418	2·385	9·3	37·2

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest information he has about the number of people who are participating in *(a)* Action for Community Employment, *(b)* the youth training programme, *(c)* the job training programme, *(d)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(e)* job clubs and *(f)* restart courses; if he will publish the comparable information for each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	ACE	YTP	JTP	EAS	Job clubs	Restart courses
1987-88	6,200	11,619	[1]393	2,422	767	2,329
1988-89	8,600	13,328	2,562	1,695	1,576	673
1989-90	10,000	12,229	6,509	1,093	3,320	[2]nil
1990-91	10,273	13,825	7,426	815	3,674	nil
1 April to 31 October 1991	10,399	16,010	4,726	659	2,346	nil

Notes:
ACE—Action for community employment.
YTP—Youth training programme.
JTP—Job training programme.
EAS—Enterprise allowance scheme.
[1]Pilot job training programme.
[2]Restart courses ceased in March 1990.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much expenditure, excluding administration costs, at cash and constant prices, has been spent in each year since 1983-84 on *(a)* Action for Community Employment, *(b)* the youth training programme, and the earlier youth opportunities programme, *(c)* the job training programme, and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(d)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(e)* job clubs and *(f)* restart courses; what is the planned expenditure in each of the years 1991-92 to 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is set out in the following tables. The constant prices have been calculated on the basis of the published Treasury GDP deflator.

Year	ACE[1]		YTP[2]		JTP[3]	
	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price
1983-84	10·6	15·9	35·2	53·1	—	—
1984-85	13·6	19·4	36·6	52·5	—	—
1985-86	17·8	24·2	40·9	55·6	—	—
1986-87	28·5	37·9	48·8	64·8	0·013	0·017
1987-88	28·8	36·2	49·8	62·5	0·213	0·267
1988-89	41·1	48·2	54·1	63·5	1·4	1·6
1989-90	50·7	55·7	58·5	64·3	5·6	6·1

Year	ACE[1]		YTP[2]		JTP[3]	
	£ million actual	£ million planned	£ million actual	£ million planned	£ million actual	£ million planned
1990-91	51·2	—	56·8	—	8·3	—
1991-92	—	51·3	—	53·0	—	11·5
1992-93	—	50·4	—	51·2	—	16·8
1993-94	—	51·0	—	53·2	—	22·5

Year	EAS[4]		Jobclubs[5]		Restart courses[6]	
	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price	£ million cash price	£ million (1990) constant price
1983-84	1·7	2·5	—	—	—	—
1984-85	2·7	3·9	—	—	—	—
1985-86	2·8	3·8	0·007	0·009	—	—
1986-87	3·8	5·0	0·044	0·058	0·035	0·046
1987-88	4·7	5·9	0·121	0·152	0·143	0·180
1988-89	4·3	5·0	0·193	0·227	0·055	0·064
1989-90	2·5	2·7	0·284	0·312	—	—

Year	EAS[4]		Jobclubs[5]		Restart courses	
	£ million actual	£ million planned	£ million actual	£ million planned	£ million actual	£ million planned
1990-91	1·5	—	0·452	—	—	—
1991-92	—	1·5	—	0·387	—	—
1992-93	—	1·5	—	0·481	—	—
1993-94	—	1·5	—	0·484	—	—

Notes:
[1] ACE—Action for community employment.
[2] YTP—Youth training programme.

[3] JTP—Job training programme commenced in 1986-87.
[4] EAS—Enterprise allowance scheme.
[5] Jobclubs commenced in 1985-86.
[6] Restart courses commenced in 1986-87 and ended in 1988-89.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual expenditure on the job training programme from the start of the programme to the estimated outturn for 1991-92; how much of each year's budget in cash terms was used to pay *(a)* the trainee's training allowances and *(b)* the trainee's training premium; and what was the average trainee allowance in each year.

Mr. Needham: Training premium is paid as part of the training allowance at a fixed rate of £10 per week. Records are maintained only in respect of gross training allowances (inclusive of the training premium) and are tabulated below together with information about annual expenditure and average training allowances.

	Annual expenditure	*Total training allowances (inclusive of training premium at £10 per week)*	*Average training allowances (inclusive of training premium at £10 per week)*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£*
1986-87	0·013	[1]—	[1]—
1987-88	0·213	[1]—	[1]—
1988-89	1·364	[1]—	[1]—
1989-90	5·564	2·911	40·23
1990-91	8·338	4·463	42·59
1991-92	[2]11·492	[2]6·307	[2]46·00

[1] Not available.
[2] Estimate.

Youth Programme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the destination of youth training programme leavers for each year since 1989-90; and, of those who found employment, how many were with the employer who provided their training.

Mr. Needham: Information on YTP leavers from full-time training provision whose destinations are known is as follows:

	1989-90	*1990-91*
Number of leavers	10,914	8,768
Employment	6,767	4,223
Full-time education	649	1,227
Unemployed	3,498	3,318

Figures are not available for YTP leavers who found employment with the employer who provided their training.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have attended restart interviews in 1990-91 and since 1 April 1991; and what were the results of those interviews broken down to show how many interviewees were placed in either *(a)* Action for Community Employment, *(b)* the job training programme, *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(d)* job clubs, *(e)* restart courses and *(f)* jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In 1990-91 75,025 people attended restart interviews. In the period April-September a further 35,371 attended. Placements were as follows:

	1990-91	*April to September 1991*
Action for community employment	896	567
Job training programme	1,712	912
Enterprise allowance scheme	231	114
Job clubs	507	240
Restart courses	—	—
Jobs	1,235	590

Ex-gratia Payments

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times in each of the last three years for which figures are available the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland has not made an ex-gratia payment recommended by an appeal tribunal.

Mr. Hanley: While this is a matter for the chief executive of the Social Security Agency, I understand that statistics on the number of ex-gratia payments recommended by an appeal tribunal that were not paid by the Department are not readily available and that the answer to this question could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Computers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he now proposes for the provision of *(a)* computer software services and *(b)* computer maintenance for the Export Credits Guarantee Department subsequent to any sale of the Insurance Services Group, Cardiff, to NCM of Amsterdam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The arrangements for the sale of the Insurance Services Group include a provision for ECGD to obtain mainframe computer processing services, application development services and maintenance for mainframe-based application systems from the privatised company for a period of two years following vesting. Information concerning the terms of sale will be made public after privatisation.

Racal Electronics

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the bid by Williams Holdings for Racal Electronics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary for State for Trade and Industry announced on 20 November that the proposed acquisition by Williams Holdings plc of Racal Electronics plc will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission unless suitable undertakings are offered by Williams to remedy the expected adverse effects of the

proposed acquisition. He has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to open negotiations immediately with Williams Holdings with a view to obtaining such undertakings. Representations on what undertakings would be appropriate to remedy the adverse effects should be made in writing to the Office of Fair Trading by 29 November 1991.

Distillers

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now publish in full his Department's inspectors' report into the contested takeover of Distillers by Guinness.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* No.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the status of the report by DTI inspectors into the contested takeover of Distillers by Guinness.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* The inspectors have submitted an interim report under the provisions of section 437(1) of the Companies Act 1985 which remains unpublished.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now make available in the Library those parts of his Department's inspectors' report into the contested takeover of Distillers by Guinness which have been made available to *(a)* Argyll and Guinness or *(b)* otherwise made public.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* No. Reports are made available to Parliament on publication.

SCOTLAND

Police National Computer

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what computer links exist, or are planned, between the Scottish criminal records office and the new police national computer, PNC2.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish criminal record office has an established link with all current PNC2 applications.

Criminal Intelligence Service

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what computer links exist, or are planned, between the National Crime Intelligence Unit (Scotland) and the existing national police intelligence databases or the proposed integrated national criminal intelligence system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The extent to which the Scottish police service will be involved with the proposed national criminal intelligence service is still under consideration and at this stage no decisions have been taken about a computer link.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the transferring of milk quotas across national borders in the European Community.

Mr. Curry: I am in principle in favour of allowing milk quotas to be freely traded between milk producers anywhere in the Community. The EC Commission has not included any such proposal in its CAP reform package.

Scottish Salmon Industry

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the Scottish salmon industry of the recent trade agreement between the EC and EFTA countries.

Mr. Curry: The agreement establishing the European economic area from 1 January 1993 makes no change to tariff levels for salmon. The contracting parties are committed to taking action to ensure there is no distortion of competition.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of adults on adult training have relevant workplace experience with employers.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many unemployed people are unable to enter adult training because training in their preferred area is not available in their local training and enterprise council area;

(2) how many training and enterprise councils allow unemployed people access to training in areas other than their own if training is not available locally; how many training and enterprise councils have a budget for this; and how this is decided.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the format requested.

Training and enteprise councils are allocated sufficient funds to meet the Government's guarantee of providing a training place on youth training or employment training for unemployed people who wish to enter these programmes. All young people over statutory school leaving age are eligible to enter and have a guarantee to receive YT training in Great Britain up to their 18th birthday.

The Government's guarantee to adults is for everyone aged 18 to 24 who has been unemployed between six and 12 months to receive an offer of employment training, a job interview guarantee, an enterprise allowance, a place in a job club or on employment action.

The Government aim is for everyone under 50 who has been unemployed for more than two years and all people with disabilities, to receive an offer of employment training, job interview guarantee, an enterprise allowance and a place in a job club or on employment action.

TECs are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in order to meet individual training needs. This can include funding training in other TEC areas if a TEC feels this is appropriate. It is for the individual TECs to liaise with each other when this situation arises.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if administration of training vouchers will be the responsibility of the TECs, what funds will be available and what is the predicted financial impact on organisations which currently make no charge for guidance.

Mr. Jackson: TECs will be responsible for the administration of vouchers for adult guidance issued under the "Gateways to Learning" pilots. The funding will be made available to TECs which successfully bid under the gateways to learning initiative to pilot improvements to the local provision of adult guidance and assessment and to test the use of vouchers for these services. The funds will also be used for central support to the pilots and for an external evaluation of the initiative.

Financial arrangements will be for local negotiation between the TECs and other local organisations involved in the pilots, including organisations currently offering guidance to adults without charge.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the changes in funding from 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 for high technology national training courses for adults; and what effect changes in funding for training have had on provision at this level.

Mr. Jackson: The funding for HTNT for the three years is as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	17
1990-91	20
1991-92	18

Provision has been maintained at broadly similar levels throughout the period.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of trainees on adult training are finished early from schemes because there are no relevant work experience placements available.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of how the £2 million for guidance and training voucher schemes will be spent.

Mr. Jackson: The funding will be made available to TECs which successfully bid under the "Gateways to Learning" initiative to pilot improvements to the local provision of adult guidance and assessment and to test the use of vouchers for these services. The funds will also be used for central support to the pilots and for an external evaluation of the initiative.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the reduction in employment training and youth training places over the last three years.

Mr. Jackson: The average number in training on employment training over the last three years and youth training scheme in 1989-90 and youth training in 1990-91 and 1991-92 are given in the table.

Average in training: 000s

Year	*ET*	*YT*
1989-90	203	367
[1]1990-91	196	325
[2]1991-92	149	326

[1] Estimated.
[2] Planned.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people entering adult training gain national vocational qualifications; and at what level.

Mr. Jackson: Twenty-seven per cent. of all people leaving employment training gained a qualification or credit towards one. There is no information available about the proportion which are national vocational qualifications.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people are refused adult training places because there are no relevant national vocational qualifications in place either in a particular vocational area or at an appropriate level.

Mr. Jackson: There is no justification for denying an unemployed person a training place on the grounds that no national vocational qualification is available. National vocational qualifications covering 40 per cent. of the employed work force at levels 1 to 4 are currently available. In order to fill the current gaps in NVQ provision, this Department issues listings of existing vocational qualifications which are accepted for use in adult and youth training until the appropriate NVQ becomes available.

TECs

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the salaries of the chief executives of the training and enterprise councils in England and Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Chief executives who are on secondment to training and enterprise councils from the Employment Department are paid the civil service salary appropriate to their grade. The salary of a directly employed chief executive is a matter for the TEC itself to decide.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the running costs of administration excluding money spent on programmes of training and enterprise councils; and what are the total administration costs of the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Jackson: The total Government contribution to the running costs of training and enterprise councils for England and Wales in 1991-92 is £124·342 million.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the private sector financial contribution to the running costs or programme costs of the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Jackson: The private sector does contribute to the costs of training, enterprise and education programmes in a variety of ways, for example, either direct to a TEC by contributions to a specific project or by meeting some of the costs of individual trainees. Information on these contributions is not available centrally.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by the training and enterprise councils in total.

Mr. Jackson: We do not hold figures for the staff TECs employ in posts which are not publicly funded. On 1 November training and enterprise councils had 3,456 in publicly funded posts, 532 direct and 2,924 secondees.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total cost of training and enterprise council board members expenses; and how many *(a)* women and *(b)* members of ethnic minorities there are.

Mr. Jackson: Reimbursement of expenses incurred by training and enterprise council board members is a matter for each TEC and central records are not maintained. Currently 122 board members are women. Information collected in summer 1991 showed that 40 board members were from an ethnic minority background.

Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the reduction in the Training, Enterprise and Education directorate administration—not programme—budget since training and enterprise councils were set up.

Mr. Jackson: Precise comparison of Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate administration/running costs with the period prior to the setting up of TECs is not possible. Area offices which preceded TECs were part of the Training Agency which was responsible for a different range of functions to those administered by TEED.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by the TEED in areas relating to training; and what do they cost.

Mr. Jackson: Setting aside staff seconded to TECs, a total of 2060·5 staff are employed in regional and Head Offices at a cost of £52·9 million for salaries and general administrative expenses on a broad range of functions covering training education and enterprise.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the reduction in the TEED programme-provision budget since TECs were set up.

Mr. Jackson: Total expenditure in Great Britain on TEED programmes in 1990-91 during which the first TECs were established was £2·8 billion compared with planned provision for 1991-92 of £2·9 billion and for 1992-93 of £2·8 billion.

Child Care

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the employment training child care budget; and whether its level has been maintained over the period 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: The proportion of the adult training budget used to provide child care support is the responsibility of individual training and enterprise councils.

From April 1991, the scope to support the child care costs on trainees of ET was extended, from the original provision for lone parents to all trainees.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many child care places were funded from the employment training budget in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Department does not collect information on the number of ET trainees receiving child care support.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Job Applications (Civil Service and Inland Revenue)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the total number of applicants for employment within (1) the civil service and (2) the Inland Revenue broken down by age and sex over the last five years, *(b)* the total number of applicants interviewed for employment within (1) the Inland Revenue and (2) the civil service over the last five years and *(c)* the total number of applicants for employment actually appointed by (1) the civil service and (2) the Inland Revenue over the last five years.

Mr. Maples: No information is held centrally about the total number by age and sex of either applicants for employment or the number of applicants interviewed. This information could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. However, some data for selected grades are available for the civil service as a whole in the Civil Service Commission annual reports. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

Data on entrants to the non-industrial home civil service and Inland Revenue are given in the tables.

Non-Industrial Staff (all grades)

	16-19	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50 and over*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
Entrants to the Inland Revenue											
1986-87	1,616	1,574	580	361	336	255	145	177	5,044	1,899	3,145
1987-88	1,631	1,898	696	443	435	409	207	247	5,966	2,202	3,764
1988-89	2,250	2,223	917	581	574	535	353	418	7,851	2,949	4,902
1989-90	1,702	1,523	740	536	532	466	279	344	6,122	2,141	3,981
1990-91	1,460	1,216	506	392	430	410	222	244	4,880	1,651	3,229
Entrants to the Home Civil Service											
1986-87	15,264	16,115	6,400	4,078	3,873	3,002	1,710	2,515	52,957	21,098	31,859
1987-88	13,720	16,199	6,470	3,900	3,682	3,431	2,054	2,947	52,403	21,711	30,692
1988-89	9,615	12,914	6,120	3,910	3,621	3,686	2,396	3,786	46,048	20,026	26,022

	16-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50 and over	Total	Men	Women
1989-90	9,600	12,335	6,293	4,275	3,810	3,873	2,438	3,832	46,456	19,356	27,100
1990-91	6,780	9,490	5,332	3,584	3,034	3,245	1,991	2,872	36,328	15,527	20,801

Source: MANDATE

Fiscal Transfers

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the Government's policy as to whether economic convergence in the EC and European monetary union will require increased regional fiscal transfers.

Mr. Maude: Economic convergence requires sound economic and monetary policies. If economic and monetary union is subject to proper convergence decisions, it should create the conditions for the growth by all member states; there is no reason why it should justify further expenditure on the structural funds, which will double in real terms between 1987 and 1993.

Knives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many illegal knives have been seized at ports over the last two years; and what plans he has to tighten up controls on imports of knives as offensive weapons.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The numbers of knives seized at ports, airports and other points of entry are as follows:

Year ending 31 March	Number
1990	903
1991	2,082

Customs are continually seeking to improve the effectiveness of their controls in this and other areas, principally by better, risk-based targeting of resources.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union on 25 November.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I attended a meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union on 24-25 November. Four main issues were discussed: the role of the Commission and the European Council in EMU, exchange rate policy in stage 3, the procedure for investigating member states' budget deficits, and the transitional provisions in the draft statute of the European system of central banks.

On institutional issues, I argued that the treaty provisions should be considered on a case-by-case basis to achieve a workable solution; the Commission should not always have the exclusive right of proposal of legislation.

The discussion of exchange rate policy was brief and the issue was remitted to personal representatives for further work.

In the discussion of the procedure for investigating budget deficits I argued that market forces and Council recommendations were the most appropriate discipline on member states and that the procedure should be concerned only with gross errors of budgetary policy. On the transitional provisions in the draft statute, the conference discussed a number of issues concerning the arrangements for non-participants in stage 3.

In a discussion of the Soviet Union, I argued for the earliest possible disbursement of the Community's food credits to meet genuine humanitarian needs. Agreement was reached on the mandate for the Commission's negotiations with the Soviet Union on the 500 mecu loan already agreed by the Community.

Civil Servants (Loans)

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will set out in tabular form the official rates of interest on loans provided to civil servants by their employers by category of loan.

Mr. Maples: Departments as employers do not normally make loans to their staff. They may provide advances of salary for travel costs, including season tickets and bicycle purchase, for house purchase where a member of staff is being compulsorily transferred in the public interest, and to assist with car purchase and miscellaneous additional expenses on posting overseas. No interest is paid on these advances. Departments and agencies also have discretion to take over any exeess bridging loan after sale charging nominal interest rates in circumstances where staff face financial hardship following a move in the public interest if they have a bridging loan in excess of the sale value of their old property. Information on the use of the discretion is not held centrally.

Oil (VAT)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the VAT rules for oil deliveries to domestic premises (i) below and (ii) above 2,300 litres.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All supplies of 2,300 litres of oil or less are always considered to be for domestic use and thus zero-rated for VAT purposes to all customers. However, where the quantity of oil delivered is more than 2,300 litres, the supply will still be zero-rated if the oil is indeed for domestic use, although the supplier may ask for a certificate from the customer to that effect.

Child Care Costs

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the information he has for each of the member states of the European Community, and for Norway, Sweden and Finland, on the tax treatment of work-related child care costs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest available information is given in the table. To make a valid comparison between countries it would be necessary to take into account the standard tax allowances and tax reliefs given to parents and the level of child benefits given through the social security system.

All amounts have been converted to sterling using the latest available purchasing power parities.

Country and treatment of work-related child care expenses

Belgium
Up to 80 per cent. of expenses are deductible in respect of children under three years old, subject to a maximum of £4·94 per child per day of care.

Denmark
No tax relief is given.

France
There is a tax reduction equal to 25 per cent. of expenses limited to £1,293 per year (1990 figure) for each child under seven years old. The tax reduction is available to single, widowed, divorced or separated taxpayers who work outside the home and to a couple where each spouse either works or attends a full-time course of higher education.

Germany
Expenses are deductible up to £1,064 per year for the first child and £532 for each additional child. A minimum lump-sum deduction of £128 (without proof of expenditure) is allowed. The deductions apply to single parents and couples if one spouse (or partner) is sick or disabled.

Greece
Taxpayers are exempt from income tax on 50 per cent. of the annual cost of sending a child to a nursery or kindergarten, up to a maximum of £549 per child per year.

Ireland
No tax relief is given.

Italy
No tax relief is given.

Luxembourg
Childcare expenses (apparently whether work-related or not) are deductible for single persons, and persons with a child under 14 years old in the household. The total deduction for childcare expenses and domestic help may not exceed £270 per year.

Netherlands
Expenses are deductible, but part of the costs (which must be proved) must be borne by the parent(s). The amount to be borne by the parent(s) ranges from 10 pence per hour for those with an annual combined income of less than £9,091 to £1·18 per hour for those with an annual combined income of over £29,091. If the expenses relate to more than one child, the amount to be borne by the parent(s) is increased by 10 pence per hour for each additional child.

Portugal
A deduction is allowed for educational expenses (including creches and nurseries, and apparently whether work-related or not) to a maximum of £700 (for single taxpayers) and £1,400 (married). These maximum amounts are cumulative with deductions allowed for other expenses eg life insurance, medical expenses.

Spain
With effect from 1 January 1992 a deduction is allowed for 15 per cent. of expenses incurred to a maximum of £137 in respect of each child under three years old if the parents work away from home and the taxpayer's net income does not exceed £10,966.

United Kingdom
Employees are exempt from income tax on the benefit of a workplace nursery place provided by their employer. No other tax relief is given.

Finland
No tax relief is given.

Norway
No tax relief is given.

Sweden
No tax relief is given.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Day: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consultations on tax returns under corporation tax pay and file.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue published proposals earlier this year on tax returns under corporation tax pay and file. These were generally well received, although there were comments on various points of detail. The Inland Revenue has revised the draft return form to take account of these comments. Companies and their advisers will be invited early next year to complete the revised return form on an experimental basis, to help them to familiarise themselves with the new procedures and to help to identify and correct any mistakes and misunderstandings before the start of pay and file.

There was one criticism which could not be dealt with at this stage as it would involve a change in the law. A number of respondents were concerned that the requirement for returns to be signed by the company secretary could put burdens on companies. The Inland Revenue will be discussing this with bodies representing businesses and their advisers to see whether a solution can be found which would not put undue burdens on the Inland Revenue or risks on the Exchequer. Any legislation needed could be introduced before the start of pay and file.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the changes in exchange rates with the ERM for each currency since the start of the system, the date of each realignment and the exchange rate between the ecu and the US dollar on each occasion.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* The table shows the changes in each ERM currency's central rate against the ecu since the start of the system (or its entry to the system):

	Ecu central rate[1]	
Currency	*1979 (or entry date)*	*Now*
Deutschemark (DM)	2·5106	2·0559
French Franc (FFC)	5·8552	6·8951
Sterling (UKL)	(0·6969)	0·6969
Dutch Guilder (HFL)	2·7208	2·3164
Belgian Franc/Luxembourg Franc (BFR/LFR)	39·458	42·403
Italian Lira (LIT)	—	—
Danish Krone (DKR)	1148·2	1538·2
Irish Punt (IRL)	7·0859	7·8420
Spanish Peseta (PTA)	0·6626	0·7674
	(133·80)	133·63

[1] the method of calculation of central rates against the ecu in the ERM is such that they all adjust if there is a realignment. Bilateral central rates between any two currencies that have not realigned remain unchanged.

There have been 12 realignments since the ERM started in 1979. The dates, the currencies that realigned their bilateral central rates, and the ecu/$ exchange rates at the time of realignment are listed below. Information on ecu/$ exchange rates in 1979 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Date of realignment	Currencies that realigned	ecu/$ rate at time of realignment
1979		
13 March	start off ERM	—
24 September	DM, DKR	—
30 November	DKR	—
1981		
23 March	LIT	0·8243
5 October	DM, DFL, FFC, LIT	0·9159
1982		
22 February	BFC, DKR	0·9678
14 June	DM, DFL, LIT, FFC	1·0220
1983		
21 March	DM, DFL, DKR, BFC, FFC, LIT, IRL	1·0612
1985		
22 July	BFC, DKR, DM, FFC, IRL, DFL, LIT	1·2856
1986		
7 April	DM, DFL, BFC, DKR, FFC	1·1109
4 August	IRL	0·9850
1987		
12 January	DM, DFL, BFC	0·9204
1989		
19 June	entry of Peseta	0·9578
1990		
8 January	LIT (to narrow band)	0·8264
8 October	entry of sterling	0·7405

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received for a realignment of currencies within the ERM; what representations he has made on this to other member states; and what consultation procedures are required before any realignment can be made.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* Adjustments of central rates within the ERM are subject to mutual agreement by all countries participating in the ERM. Discussions between member states in this respect are confidential.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what help is available from other ERM members to support currencies falling to the bottom of their range; and whether more is available to currencies in 2·5 per cent. bands than to those in 6 per cent. bands.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* If one currency is at its limit against another in the ERM, the central banks of both currencies each have an unlimited obligation to buy or sell at the limiting rates during European business hours. The EMS provides for a very short-term facility (VSTF) under which credit is automatically available in unlimited quantities to finance such obligatory intervention at the limiting rates.

If intervention is undertaken when one currency is not at its limit against another in the ERM the VSTF can be made available, but not automatically.

The amounts that can be made available do not differ between wide band and narrow band currencies. VSTF credits have to be repaid within a period of three months.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what notification is required to members of the ERM of interest rate changes in member countries; and what advance warning he was given of the last French rate increase.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* National monetary authorities are not required to notify other ERM participants in advance of interest rate changes. I cannot reveal the content of consultations with the monetary authorities of other member states.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue which would be raised by applying 9 per cent. national insurance contribution to *(a)* all non-pensioners' investment income received by basic rate taxpayers and *(b)* all investment income received by basic rate taxpayers disregarding the first £3,000 investment income in each case.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 November 1991]:* A charge of 9 per cent. on investment income in excess of £3,000 for individuals aged under 65 who are liable to tax only at the basic rate would yield about £220 million in a full year at 1991-92 levels of income. The corresponding yield from basic rate taxpayers aged 65 and over would be about £270 million.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SESSION 1991-92

18th November—29th November 1991

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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